

H. G. Jones

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Rights

WOMAN'S RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

BY THE AUTHOR.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS AND DUTIES.



VOLUME THE FIRST.

JOHN'S RIGHT AND DUTY

TO THE STATE

W O M A N ' S
R I G H T S A N D D U T I E S

CONSIDERED WITH RELATION TO THEIR
INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY AND ON
HER OWN CONDITION.

B Y A W O M A N .

I N T W O V O L U M E S .

V O L . I .

L O N D O N :
J O H N W . P A R K E R , W E S T S T R A N D .

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P R E F A C E.

IN moral inquiries of a practical nature like the present, anything pretending to novelty would be in great danger of becoming paradoxical. But if truths that are generally admitted are also very often neglected, it shows, either that their importance has not been adequately felt, or that the manner of applying them to practice has not been made sufficiently evident to common understandings. When circumstances are such as to exhibit the consequences of some error very strongly, truths that had been habitually disregarded, acquire force and activity. This occurred in America with respect to intemperance, and a rapid and remarkable change is said to have taken place. We find, therefore, that people can sometimes be led, by regard for the interests of society, to practise self-control; and it is not too much to expect also in other cases, that if the mischiefs which flow from certain false principles can be made equally evident, the languid assent yielded to a general maxim may be converted to practical conviction. For a purpose that aims so little at novelty, the qualifications most requisite are

reflection and observation; and they who have felt the subject most deeply are more likely to succeed than others who, with greater ability, have thought less of the matter. Some of the reflections now offered to the reader's attention were graven on the mind of the writer by the force of circumstances at an early age, long before it is usual for stern realities to occupy the thoughts. Many more have been a deposit slowly disengaged from the partial opinions produced by personal feelings and accidental positions, from the confusion occasioned by the conflicting theories of different writers, and the numerous prejudices imposed on women by education and society.

A strong conviction of useful truth is inseparable from the desire to spread it. When the hopes of distinction (the fairy-land of youth) have passed away, there springs up in the mind another and more durable feeling, one more consistent and vigorous in its action—the desire of utility. This has been the mainspring of the present undertaking. Not that the writer affects an indifference to approbation, which it is no particular merit to feel, but it is simply the fact, that personal ambition alone never had proved sufficiently strong to counteract the reluctance to gratuitous labour, or to lead her to brave the chances of mortification.

When the purpose was once formed of attempting to give some effect to views and opinions held

with an earnest conviction of their importance, the choice of a connecting subject was not difficult. Observations and reflections, made separately, on many different subjects of moral inquiry, when contemplated together, exhibited a mutual dependence; and little remained but to determine among the several principles intended to pervade the whole work, which should be made the leading object.

Circumstances had led her continually and anxiously to study the influences of our manners on the formation of character; and to consider what habits of mind would enable the young to resist their perversions, to reap the advantages of them, and to contribute to social improvement.

The actual amount of virtue and happiness in society, appeared to her to be quite disproportionate to the knowledge and the means we possess.

This opinion suggested the belief that a wider extension of the knowledge we have, was an object of still greater importance than its absolute increase.

The vices, follies, and prejudices which impede our progress in every direction, appeared in some measure referable to certain bad social habits, and to defects in the moral training of youth, over both of which the influence of women is immediate and great, and might be extremely beneficial if their own views could be raised.

The condition of women, liable to many privations, yet without any corresponding advantage to

society, had often painfully engaged her attention. The injudicious pretensions sometimes made on their behalf are so contrary to their true interests, that it appeared very desirable to inculcate sounder opinions, if possible, and rescue their real rights from the fatal advocacy of indiscreet friends.

This subject, of the condition of women, which at first sight may not appear very closely connected with the others, on a short consideration showed a relation sufficiently intimate, to make it the proper connecting link for the whole. The education and views that would enable women to be the agents of great social improvement, would infallibly raise their own condition; which is more powerfully affected by the state of opinion and feeling than by positive laws. Opinion will practically yield rights which law refuses, and withhold those that law endeavours to secure; and opinion could not fail to give increased consideration to those whose influence was daily felt in wisely-directed and beneficial exertions.

In any attempt to influence the opinions and practice of others, it is expedient to prove the importance of them to society; to exhibit on a great scale the effects of existing bad habits, prejudices, and ignorance; and to trace their connexion with the social disorders which spring from them at last. Those disorders, at this moment, are unhappily in great activity.

It is this reference to the collective effects of conduct and actions which produces the generous spirit of a citizen. For while a person thinks of nothing but the immediate consequences of his conduct to himself or his own circle, though he keep free from great vice, and even have some good feelings, he may still be but a selfish, insignificant being, or part of a mischievous mass.

With these views the writer, after some preliminary observations in the first and second chapters on the condition of women in different stages of civilization, proceeds in the third to examine the grounds and the limits of their subordination on the principles of justice.

In the fourth, their present condition is considered with respect to its advantages, its evils, and the means within their own control of improving it further, through the beneficial influence they might exert on society.

In the fifth, such of the defective conditions of society are remarked as seem capable of being improved by the spreading of well-chosen knowledge, and the early implanting of certain good principles, now too little attended to. For both these purposes, it is contended that the abilities and opportunities of women are peculiarly adapted.

In the three following, the subject of the last chapter is developed and made practical by examining, under the heads of luxury, frivolity, and igno-

rance, those habits and manners which come within either the control or the influence of women.

It had been the original plan to add another part to the work, consisting of reflections on the principles of female education, on the cultivation of the mind, and on the effects and uses of particular branches of study. But without some certainty that the present volumes will be read, it seemed imprudent to extend the work.

In the prosecution of this plan the writer has been painfully conscious that some of the discussions, to the learned, will have the air of elaborate truisms; to the uninstructed, others will appear difficult. The first class are entreated to recollect, that much which is obvious to them is quite the reverse to the unthinking; that from their own habits they cannot be fully aware how wide, in the minds of the many, is the distance between assent to a proposition, and the power of applying it to practice; and to bear in mind that the present purpose is not to unfold new truths, but to render what are established, known and practical. The latter class must be reminded that it was sometimes essential to ground the argument on principles that would bear rigid examination; and they must be aware that such examinations cannot be followed without an effort of attention which may be painful to some persons. This work, though not written for the highly instructed, assuredly aims at their

sanction; and, therefore, the doctrines it contains might not be left without solid proof, unless where apparently incapable of dispute.

The reader will not fail to be struck with some repetitions. They are not the result of carelessness, but are intended to connect certain principles with the several subjects to which they apply, and to keep them steadily before the mind.

The writer may be utterly deceived as to the utility of these speculations; but it will, perhaps, be received as a defence from the charge of presumption, that they have not been proposed to the consideration of others without many years of labour, as assiduous as the duties of life would permit.

NOTICE.

THIS work was printed and ready for publication last July, but it was deemed unadvisable to bring it forward so late in the season. Since then, or while it was yet in the press, and too late to make any additions, works have appeared, which otherwise should not have been passed over without notice. Some public transactions, which bore on a branch of the subject, have also been unavoidably left without any allusion. In particular, the writer regrets that she could not avail herself of the strength that her arguments might have derived from the evidence recently brought forward by Lord Ashley and others respecting infant labour. But she trusts that the course of events which may have left her details incomplete, will but confirm the principles she has advocated. To her mind they rise every day with fresh conviction, but as the time of publication approaches, and she coolly reviews her own pages, she cannot resist adopting the following words to express her feelings: "I sometimes lose all courage, and wonder what fond opinion of my talents could ever have induced me

to venture on so bold an undertaking*.” If this diffidence could be felt by one in whom such talents and virtues were united, as have seldom met together to bless the living generation, or shed their light on posterity, it would be strange indeed, if the present writer did not shrink at her temerity in coming forward at all.

* *Memoirs of Sir Samuel Romilly*, vol. i., p. 243.

November,

1840.

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WOMAN'S RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

CHAPTER I.

PREVAILING CONDITION OF WOMEN IN PRIMITIVE,
SAVAGE, AND BARBAROUS STATES; AND
UNDER ANCIENT CIVILIZATION.

SECTION I.

General Reflections.

It was once suggested by an eminent physiologist, that the greatest enjoyments of our animal nature, might be those which from their constancy escape our notice altogether.

His investigations had led him to think, that even the involuntary motions carried on in our system, were productive of pleasure; and that the act of respiration was probably attended by a sensation as delightful, as the gratifications of the palate. It is certain, that every sense is a source of unnoticed pleasures. Sound and light are agreeable in themselves, before their varied combinations have produced music to our ear, or conveyed the perceptions of form to our mind. Innumerable are the emotions of pleasure conveyed to the imagination and the senses, by the endless diversities of form, colour, and sound; and the unbought riches poured upon us from these sources, are more prolific of enjoyment, than any of

the far sought distinctions which stir the hopes and rivalries of men. Yet, on these and other spontaneous blessings, no one reflects, or even enumerates them among the sources of happiness, till some casual suspension of them, revives sensibility to the delight they afford.

Thus with the year

Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me; from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair,
Presented with an universal blank
Of nature's works, to me expunged and razed,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.—*Par. Lost.*

Light, the prime work of God, to me's extinct,
And all the various objects of delight
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased.

Oh! dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day!
Oh! first created beam, and thou great Word,
Let there be light, and light was over all;
Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.—*Samson Agon.*

Such are the lamentations, though rarely so eloquently uttered, which we daily hear, on the loss of some possession, which while held was scarcely noticed; and could preserve its owner, neither from the gloom of apathy, nor the irritation of discontent.

Were it not for this, the necessary effect of habit

both in the physical and moral world, women might be expected to live in daily and hourly exultation, who have been born in a Christian and civilized country. Whatever theorists may have thought occasionally of the happiness of men in barbarous or savage conditions, no doubt at all can be entertained as to that of women. It is civilization which has taken the yoke from their neck, the scourge from their back, and the burden from their shoulders. It is Christianity chiefly, which has raised them from the state of slaves or menials to that of citizens, and compelled their rough and unresisted tyrants to call up law in their defence; that potent spirit which they, who have evoked it, must ever after themselves submit to. Religion which extends the sanctity of the marriage vow to the husband, as well as to the wife, has rescued her from a condition in which her best and most tender affections were the source of her bitterest misery; a condition in which her only escape from a sense of suffering too unremitting for nature to endure, was in that mental degradation which produces insensibility to wrong. The instances of primitive communities, in which such injustice has not prevailed, are too few and far between, to form any solid objection to the truth of this general picture. The mere increase of numbers infallibly obliterates the fair, but feeble virtues, that originate in nothing but ignorance of ill; and the first inroads of want or discord, usually settle the doom of the weak and defenceless. In restoring to women their domestic dignity, religion has done more than every other cause towards shielding them from the conse-

quences of weakness and dependence. From the dignified affections of the other sex, they have gradually acquired some social rights, and some share of that freedom, without which virtue itself can scarcely exist. Opinion, the offspring, not of resplendent genius, whose earliest fires burned indignantly against the tyrant and oppressor, but of a religion which preached the equality of all before God, has given them a share of those blessings, without which, life is not worth possession. At length it has opened to them the portals of knowledge and wisdom, the gradual, but effective supports against degradation; and has sanctified its gifts by withholding from them every license that leads to vice, every knowledge that detracts from their purity, and every profession that would expose them to insult.

The subordination of women is a law of nature, but their degradation is not. The first is grounded on the indefeasible power of the strong over the weak; but the second is resolvable into the same causes which generate every other form of ferocity, when the passions of mankind are in their maturity, and their reason in its childhood. The male part of creation is no more sent into the world with a disposition to oppress the female, than to destroy the young, though both be committed. The practice is *natural* in no other sense, than that in which ferocity, slavery, and licentiousness are so too. This application of the term is sometimes required, to distinguish the spontaneous impulses of our passions and feelings, from the habits imposed upon us by education and government. But, in this sense, the practice of nature is no

sanction for anything that reason disapproves; for reason is the most distinguishing attribute of human nature, and its especial office is to regulate our passions and impulses.

Custom has fully authorized the use of the terms "natural," and "state of nature," when we want merely to distinguish the spontaneous from the acquired; but we must not use the terms in one sense and argue from them in another. When we appeal to nature as a sanction for anything, it is that we may know what is good for us. The sanction of nature is indeed the strongest we can have. To develop its laws is the object of all philosophy. No supposed amendment can ever take root that has a law of nature against it; and as the purpose of this work depends very much on interpreting its dictates justly, in behalf of the female sex, it is of some moment to ascertain clearly what we mean, when we justify a practice on the grounds of its being *natural*.

SECTION II.

Interpretation of the terms "Natural" and "State of Nature."

Much confusion has arisen, from forgetting that reason is the most essential and distinguishing part of the nature of man; and, that we can no more deny to any condition which brings it to maturity, the right to be deemed natural, than we can deny that right to the condition that perfects his bodily powers.

At one time the love of paradox, or perhaps an acute sensibility to the miseries co-existing with the glare of luxury, drew forth from Rousseau such eloquent invectives against civilization, that Voltaire declared one was tempted to go down upon all fours, and trot off to the woods. If these sophisms are exploded, it is rather because their authors have ceased to be popular, than that the nature of their fallacies is seen through by all who can smile at them. Other and more numerous sects have sprung up, much at variance in principle, yet all agreeing to represent reason and nature as opposed to each other.

Some side with nature, and assure us we should seldom go wrong if we followed her simple dictates, and did not perplex ourselves with the subtleties of our reasonings, which they call artificial. But, if we follow the precept, and yield to the natural suggestions of passion and appetite, our teachers are as strong in their censures as the rest of mankind. Others there are, who boldly declare against nature herself. They say she is utterly corrupt and incapable of anything good: and they recommend us for guidance, to revelation alone. They are, however, not the less disposed to censure the factitious habits and tastes of the great world, on the grounds of their being unnatural; and it is quite out of their power, not to feel more detestation for crimes that are against our instinctive affections, than for others. They direct odium against nature, yet, consider it an aggravation of criminality, that her precepts are violated. Against reason, indeed, they are still more severe. They consider it a light, sent rather to mis-

lead than to guide. But in the hands of such masters, we are sadly perplexed. To dissuade us from trusting to our refined speculations, and teach us to look for the simplicity of nature, the first must appeal to proofs and arguments, that is, to reason. In the same manner, must they prove the truth and perfection of revelation, who try to discredit both reason and nature. To reason itself they appeal, to overturn the authority of reason. Thus, the very source of conviction itself being invalidated, nothing remains but inextricable confusion, or utter scepticism.

The term Nature, or Natural, is evidently used in two different senses. The first is that which we have been considering; in which it is opposed to the habits and arts dependent on the exertions of reason. The distinction, in many speculations, is not only useful but requisite. It is often desirable to distinguish the course our impulses would take, independent of the direction they receive from education and government; and the terms Natural and Artificial, though incapable of limitation, are sufficiently accurate for the purpose.

In the other, the more comprehensive and accurate sense, it implies everything that belongs to the constitution of each creature, or conduces to its perfect developement. We cannot know the whole nature of anything, till every power that it possesses has been brought forth to its utmost extent. Every condition that develops any power or property belonging to the constitution of each creature, is so far agreeable to its nature, that is, it is natural; and the condition that brings all its powers and properties to their

fullest perfection, is the most perfectly consonant to its nature. The first, or most common condition in which anything is found, is not, *in this sense*, more natural than its less usual condition. Metals exist commonly in the state of ores, but their nature is best known in their purity. It is only in this sense, that the discovery of what is natural is any reason for adopting it. Nothing, in this sense, is unnatural that brings forward the powers and faculties of the creature, but everything is unnatural exactly in the degree in which it tends to impede them. If art be essential to bringing forward the most distinguishing attributes of human nature, the inference is, that a state of art is natural to man. Particular powers, indeed, may acquire unusual activity under circumstances disadvantageous to the rest. One set of muscles may be brought to a degree of strength above all the others; the eye, the ear, the touch may each acquire extraordinary acuteness; exclusive attention to memory, or to imagination, sometimes brings those faculties to surprising power; the whole mind may be exercised at the expense of bodily vigour, or bodily vigour acquired to a degree incompatible with mental activity. But such partial excitements, attended with proportionate weakness in other particulars, are fairly considered as departures from nature, as the loss sustained by the creature upon the whole, in many such instances detracts more from his power than he has gained. We rather lose than gain by the sacrifice of one capacity to the increase of another; the harmonious relations and symmetry of the whole, which are essential to power, being thereby impaired.

It follows, that the most perfectly natural state for a human being, would be one in which all his faculties, physical, moral, and intellectual, were drawn forth into their highest activity consistently with each other. Nor ought we to shrink from this conclusion, because we think he will never so exist on the face of this earth. Take what test we will of a natural condition, we shall never find one to which all mankind could be brought.

SECTION III.

The Practices of Savage Life, are no test of what is Natural.

As it is the perverted habits we find amongst civilized people, that we usually call sophisticated, it will be proper to show that the practices of savage life, are no test at all of what is natural. Their customs are as much sophisticated in many respects, as those of the most polished nations. Hence, every attempt to prove that one practice is more natural than another, because it prevails in savage life, falls to the ground; for it is more natural to leave it off, than to continue it, when happiness is promoted by the change.

The most extravagant doctrines of the stoical philosophy, whose iron precepts rendered its lofty character inapplicable to practice, are rather outstripped by the customs of some North American nations*.

* *Inquiries, Historical and Moral, respecting the Characters of Nations*, by HUGH MURRAY.

“As soon as the young Indian attains the age of twelve years, he is admitted to the public councils of his nation; he becomes a warrior and a statesman, and is expected to assume a dignity of deportment, suited to those high characters.” “In particular, he must be exempted from the sway of trifling and ephemeral passions; he must display an unvarying tranquillity, a superiority to all the ordinary feelings and occurrences of life.”

“One of the most remarkable features in their domestic intercourse, is their politeness. Their whole conversation is regulated by the most studious attention, to say nothing which can displease those to whom it is addressed. Whoever speaks is listened to, never interrupted, never contradicted.” “Nothing can exceed their generosity, or the tenderness and fidelity of their friendships; but no trace of human weakness is ever to appear.” “Even on occasions, when with us, feeling is considered manly and honourable, the Indian suppresses it with care, and wraps himself up in a stern insensibility. If told that his son has performed a gallant action, he coldly replies, ‘It is well.’ If told of his death, he replies, ‘No matter.’ When his wife comes to meet him on his return from an expedition, in which, perhaps, several of their children have fallen, he takes no notice, never speaks to or looks at her, but silently stalks in and seats himself. Then, indeed, after sitting a few hours, he may perhaps mention the news, but carelessly, and as a matter of indifference.”

“Even when nearly starving, when he comes to any place where food may be had, he never asks for it;

but if his wants be not anticipated, returns without complaining."

The tortures the Indians will endure without betraying the least sense of pain, are too well known to need repetition.

Can any one regard our most curious refinements in the luxury of the table, as equally unnatural with the practice of roasting and eating our fellow creatures? Or the most perverted insensibility to the pleasures of the heart and imagination, which is one of the most frequent topics of reproach to the votaries of dissipation, as much opposed to the impulses of nature as infanticide? A practice carried on in some parts of the world, to such frightful extent, as almost to threaten with depopulation, some of the most bountiful regions upon earth; that too, among a people, not otherwise hard and ferocious, but peculiarly susceptible of tender and amiable emotions*.

No invention of French fashion was ever less natural than tattooing the body, or inserting a silver stud through the under lip, the two front teeth being driven out to receive it; and the weight of which, after a year or two, drags down the lip, so as to lie upon the chin†.

The cramped feet of the Chinese, or the pinched waist of a young English lady, are outdone in extravagance by the custom of flattening the top of the head, till the line from the point of the nose to the

* ELLIS'S *Polynesian Researches*.

† DENHAM and
CLAPPERTON'S *Travels*.

crown of the head, forms a right angle with that of the body and face*.

Nature might find it hard to recognise her daughter from her likeness to herself, either in the waists of our grandmothers, squeezed to the dimensions of an orange and a half in circumference, or in those of a Moorish beauty crammed under the lash, till her bulk requires a slave under each arm to sustain her weight†.

In truth, the more we acquaint ourselves with the habits and manners of the uncivilized nations, which cover so large a portion of the globe, the more we shall be convinced, that the true nature of man is to be sought for in the dominion of reason. When that remains very imperfectly developed, he is not on that account found more, but much less in a state of nature. The full developement of instinct, appetite, and passion, which brings the nature of the inferior animals to its fullest perfection, does not do so with man. He is under a further law, and, however defectively it may operate from want of exercise, yet he cannot withdraw himself wholly from its control. The rudest savage, the merest creature of impulse, is actuated by his reason, such as it is, in every pursuit of his life. It is his reason directs him how to ensnare his enemy, and how to torture him. It is reason points out to him, that by destroying his child in its infancy, he shall avoid the future trouble of its maintenance. The difference between him and the civilized, is that

* LEWIS and CLARKE's *Travels*. See FLAT HEADS.

† PARK's *Travels*.

in him reason (which differs from mere sense in being peculiarly progressive) has never got beyond its first steps. In its weakness, it is incapable of a process long enough to unfold his real interests. He sees very little beyond the immediate objects of sense, and has no idea of any mode of life, but his own. To his reason, however, such as it is, his will is as obedient, his character as plastic as ours, sometimes more so. Frequently he evinces for the most absurd or mischievous ends, control over his passions and emotions beyond what the refinement of civilization ever requires, or the sternest morality instils. He can, therefore, depart from the simplicity of nature like others, and like them, he can new mould his original propensities and sensibilities, till a new character is formed, bad or good according as reason has been ill or well cultivated; and often deriving more tenacity from habit and prejudice, than from the force of passion.

The study of human nature is full of utility, under every form in which we find it. No improvement can ever take place, that is not based upon its laws. It is, therefore, most important to know them; but they can never be truly understood by contemplating mankind, only under one set of circumstances; they should be viewed under every variety our observations can reach to. If we find any practice exceedingly prevalent under considerable diversity of condition, no doubt it affords a presumption, that there may be a propensity to it, implanted in our nature. But it should be received with great caution, for on this ground have been

defended some of the most destructive practices, that have afflicted the human race,—war, slavery, despotism, polytheism, polygamy, have all had their apologists ; but those things, like disease and deformity, are the incidents, not the purposes of our nature. Even as the world now is, we find amongst untutored nations, exceptions to their prevalence. The progress of reason and religion can either abolish or extremely diminish them, and in proportion as they succeed in so doing, the numbers and prosperity of mankind increase. These are sufficient proofs, that the evils in question are not laws of nature, nor agreeable to them.

The argument is strictly applicable to the condition of the female sex. No authority can be drawn from the frequency of the practice, for reducing them to an inferior condition. Their subordination must be grounded on better reasons, namely, its tendency to promote the greater good of both sexes, and can be justified no further than as it has that effect. The sanction of nature can be appealed to in no other sense. The practices of the least thinking part of mankind, may be consulted advantageously, to learn what is the course of nature under those particular circumstances ; always remembering, that this gives but a partial and limited acquaintance with her laws, and affords no argument for what is natural under other and very dissimilar conditions.

SECTION IV.

*Degradation of Women prevalent, but not universal in
Uncivilized Life.*

When the theory was started, that a state of nature was a state of war, the common sense of mankind revolted from such a conclusion. It was generally felt, that notwithstanding the host of examples and arguments with which an ingenious man might strengthen his proposition, it was too extravagant to suppose that nature had made a special appointment to dispose mankind to their own destruction. It was seen, that the prevalence of war could be accounted for, without supposing it exclusively the natural condition of the creature. Accordingly, we find examples of peaceful societies, as well among primitive tribes, as among the more civilized. And in like manner, the history of the world supplies instances, in which the female sex has been neither enslaved nor oppressed.

There are no grounds for believing the propensity to violence innate, though it be easily engendered by the sufferings which, in a rude state of society, soon confine the attention of the individual to his own sensations; and by the unbridled animosities which competition with others, as selfish as himself, provokes. There is some reason to think, that when circumstances have not been such as to generate vengeful passions, man is to be classed with the quiet and gentle, rather than the ferocious animals*. The

* HUGH MURRAY; *Inquiry*, &c., passim.

human race is scattered over the globe, in a great variety of conditions, from large nations down to solitary families; some, where the bounty of nature scarcely leaves room for contention, others, where the thinly scattered inhabitants can scarcely exist, except by reciprocal privations. Voyages and travels supply many instances of tribes or small nations, whose numbers are too scanty to create a struggle for subsistence, and too distant from each other for frequent hostilities. In such situations, the human character is usually inoffensive and mild, sometimes peculiarly amiable and affectionate; and here, the two sexes are usually found on a footing of apparent equality, or distinguished only by that slight subordination on the part of the weaker, which is almost unavoidably entailed by their requiring assistance and protection, and which may rightly be deemed natural. It is not uncommon, indeed, to find writers adducing the condition of the female sex, as a test of the degrees of civilization; and upon the whole, it is a tolerably fair one. For when the soft and transient virtues of an untempted condition have been obliterated, it requires considerable progress in civilization, before sympathy with others, and generosity to the weak, will recover their dominion. Captain Franklin, on the authority of Mr. Wentzel, who resided many years in the districts about M'Kenzie's River, mentions a tribe called Dogrib Indians, among whom the women are treated with perfect kindness*; and Captain Parry by contrasting what he styles the real character of the savage, with that of the Indians, seems to have

* FRANKLIN'S *Journey*.

been led by his own observation, to consider the degradation of women a corruption, not the natural and inevitable condition of uncivilized life.

“It is here,” he says, “as a social being, as a husband and the father of a family, promoting in his own little sphere the benefit of that community, in which providence has placed him, that the *moral character of a savage* is to be truly sought; and who can turn without horror from the Esquimaux, peaceably seated, after a day of honest labour, with his wife and children in their snow-built hut, to the self-willed and vindictive Indian, wantonly plunging his dagger in the bosom of the helpless woman, whom nature bids him cherish and protect*?”

La Perouse presents the reader with more than one people, whom habits of peace had left in possession of amiable and mild dispositions. When he first landed on Segalien Island, he found there, a race whose intelligence was no less remarkable than their virtues. This is the more deserving of observation, because it affords at least one instance, in which some degree of commerce and education had been obtained, without passing through a stage of war. “We know,” he says, “that the most numerous nations, and those who were earliest civilized, inhabit the countries which border on these islands, but it does not appear that they have ever conquered them, because there were no temptations for their cupidity†;” and to this circumstance, La Perouse seems to attribute their gentleness.

The village of the Orotchies on the east coast of

* PARRY'S *Second Voyage*.

† *Voyage Round the World*.

Tartary, a tribe in a very low state of civilization, presented the same soothing picture of family affection, gentle and courteous manners, and such stainless honesty and fair dealing, that the things most desired by these simple beings might be left unguarded within their reach. Their respect for the old, and their tenderness to children, were equally remarkable.

In the first place, where La Perouse remained but a short time, he was not indeed permitted to see the women, which he attributed to precaution; but at the latter, he observes, that that sex were treated with the greatest consideration, and no bargain concluded without their assent*.

Cartwright†, in his account of Labrador, where he passed sixteen years, describes the thinly scattered people with whom that wild and extensive coast is peopled, as the most uncivilized he had ever seen, but at the same time, the best tempered and most docile; nor had he ever known any, with whom person and property were so perfectly safe. And yet he observes that previously Europeans had seldom had any intercourse with those nations, without its ending in violence and theft. This he attributes entirely to the cruelty and injustice of the civilized towards them; instances of which, he says, had been told to him by the perpetrators themselves, without shame or remorse, some so atrocious, that he forbore to pain his readers by the recital‡.

* *Voyage Round the World.* † See *Sixth Voyage.*

‡ *Account of Labrador.*

An Italian of the name of Quirini, in the fourteenth century, was thrown with his crew upon a small island in the Northern Ocean, where they spent three months, and during the whole of that time, they perceived among the people the greatest mutual affection, the most anxious, and seemingly the most disinterested, desire of making each other happy.

In the island of St. John, one of the Azores, in the Terra del Fuego where the inhabitants are almost stupified with want and wretchedness, and in various other places recorded by Cook, Bougainville, and several other voyagers who visited remote and solitary districts, many similar instances have been found, in none of which the women were exposed to any peculiar hardship, or reduced to the condition of inferiors. These last quotations are taken from the writer already referred to, whose purpose had led him to make extensive researches*: but the reader of travels will recall a few such peaceful pictures to his recollection, rising up in agreeable contrast with the general ferocity of uncivilized countries†.

Captain Clarke says‡, that his own observations on the treatment of the female sex in savage states leads him to the opinion, "that it is not regulated by any progress in the virtuous principles of the male part of the community, but solely by the power of the women to be useful. The Indians, whose treatment of the female sex is mildest, and

* HUGH MURRAY, *Characters of Nations*. † See Note A.

‡ LEWIS and CLARKE'S *Travels*.

who pay most deference to their opinions, are by no means most distinguished for their virtues, nor does it seem to be attended by any increase of attachment towards them. On the other hand, the tribes among whom the women are very much debased, possess the loftiest sense of honour, the greatest liberality, and all the good qualities of which their situation demands the exercise."

"Where the women can aid in procuring subsistence for the tribes, they are treated with more equality, and their importance is proportioned to the share they take in that labour, while in countries where subsistence is procured chiefly by the labour of the men, the women are considered and treated as a burden. Thus, among the Clatsops and Chinooks who live upon fish and roots, which the women are equally as expert as the men in procuring, the former have a rank and influence, very rarely found among Indians. The females are permitted to speak freely before the men, to whom indeed they sometimes address themselves in a tone of authority. On many subjects, their judgment and opinion are respected, and in matters of trade, their advice is generally asked and pursued. The labours of the family too, are shared almost equally. The men collect wood and make fires, assist in cleaning the fish, make the houses, canoes, and wooden utensils, and whenever strangers are to be entertained, or a great feast prepared, the meats are cooked and served up by the men. The peculiar province of the female is to collect roots, to manufacture the various articles which are formed of

rushes, flags, cedar bark, and bears-grass; but the management of the canoes, and many of the occupations which elsewhere devolve upon the female, are here common to both sexes."

This traveller remarks that the treatment of the old depends as little upon the general character of the tribe, as the treatment of women. But as humanity to the aged cannot be accounted for by their utility, one can scarcely forbear from thinking that there may be somewhat more humanizing in the habits of some tribes than in those of others, especially of the hunting tribes, who seem the most cruel.

"Among the hunting tribes," says Captain Clarke, "as soon as the old can neither follow in their excursions, nor be useful by his counsels, his children or nearest relations, when they are setting out, place before him a piece of meat, and some water, telling him he has now lived long enough, and that it is time for him to go home to his ancestors, who can take better care of him than his friends upon earth; and leave him thus to perish, without remorse."

The greater comparative moral dignity attributed to some of the tribes who are most cruel in their treatment of women, exemplifies what history and experience very often bring to notice, that the oppression of the defenceless by no means implies peculiar cruelty of disposition. Those most conscious of amiable and benevolent feelings would do well to watch their own conduct, when they have power in their hands; for even generous intentions,

combined with pride, frequently form an insoluble compound, that renders men intolerant of all opposition, even in opinions. Pride blinds them to the rights of those they deem their inferiors, and their honesty of purpose disguises from them their own errors. When these qualities are conjoined with an ardent temperament, men frequently lose all sympathy with the rights and feelings they are crushing in their progress towards their own designs. This is one great argument against arbitrary power.

When we find men very oppressive in their general conduct, we are apt to infer hastily, that they are quite callous to contrary emotions. But this is a mistake. As human nature is always the same, the emotions that are most repressed and subdued are however seldom totally eradicated; causes impossible to trace, draw them forth into activity, on particular occasions, or in partial directions; and thus it is, that if we find the humane and the generous, sometimes inconsiderately hard and oppressive to certain devoted classes of their fellow-creatures, at other times we happen to find the defenceless, the slave, the female, and the conquered, treated with generosity, where the general corruption would lead us least to expect it.

In central Africa, a region where the theorists of climate would scarcely look for peculiar mildness of character, and where the general practice presents the worst excesses of female oppression, there occur some pleasing pictures of innocence and happiness. There, in the most luxuriant districts, whose mighty streams sustain a force of verdure and vegetation no

sun can fade, and whose golden sands are trivial wealth compared to the fruits and crops which ripen on their banks, Lander describes small nations*, who seem from time immemorial to have lived remote from their more warlike countrymen. Quiet, harmless, and incurious, they meddle in none of the changes going on around them, enjoying a serene and happy life, in the practice of social tenderness rarely to be met with, even in civilized life, and gifted with an everlasting flow of gaiety like children.

In general, the Falatahs, of whom these people are a tribe, are a warlike, vigorous-minded race; naturally amiable, but observed to be increasing gradually in ferocity, as their nations appeared to be more or less accustomed to war. The female sex, though not placed on a footing of equality with the other, never appeared to be treated with cruelty. Lander describes them as artless, modest, and engaging, intelligent, and free from that boisterous mirth, which appears to be characteristic of Africans. The custom of polygamy is, however, a decisive proof of their comparative degradation. The description given by Lander of the Cumbrie people near Boossa is peculiarly interesting, and the total freedom from oppression of the women in some tribes of the Falatah nation, is the more remarkable from their being all Mahometans†.

To the westward of Moorzuk, Captain Denham observes of the Tuaricks‡, that the liveliness of the women, the tone of equality with which they ad-

* LANDER'S *Travels*.

† Ibid.

‡ DENHAM and

CLAPPERTON.

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dressed the men, and the attention paid to them by the latter, formed a striking contrast with other Mahometan states. They were naturally a fine people, courteous, amiable, and very intelligent.

The patriarchal virtues and innocence found in the small colony in Pitcairn's Island, the descendants from the mutineers of the *Bounty*, may be referred to the same causes that allow tenderness and justice to spring up towards the weaker sex, in every stage of society where the selfish and ferocious passions have not been stimulated.

The more human nature is studied, the more strongly we are led to believe that national character is more dependent on moral causes, than on climate, or any supposed inherent qualities of race. Nothing hardens the heart so soon as want; and it rarely happens that society can increase in numbers, without feeling, sooner or later, the pressure of that evil. Hence arise contentions, war, revenge, and every other unsocial passion. In the primitive conditions above described, man is a creature of mere impulse. The moment new circumstances arise, he yields without resistance to the temptations they bring, and passes, apparently without reflection on the moral quality of his actions, from the extreme of gentleness to that of violence and ferocity. It is but seldom therefore that the weaker sex can escape without oppression.

The most remarkable exception to this consequence was found among the ancient Germans, as described by Tacitus. To this singular people may be traced back, that spirit which, under the influence

of a favouring religion, raised women at one period to a romantic degree of honour.

“The greatest incitement to the valour of these nations,” says Tacitus*, “is that those who compose their squadrons and columns, are not cast together at random, but stationed in the same ranks with their own kindred; their families are placed near them in such a manner, that the cries of their wives and infants may be heard by them all. These are their most hallowed witnesses; from these proceeds their greatest honour. They bring their wounds to wives and mothers, who shrink not from the task of viewing and even sucking them. It is they who exhort the combatants, and supply them with food.”

“It is recorded amongst them, that the broken ranks of the combatants have been sometimes restored by the fervent entreaties and opposing breasts of the women, calling on them to remember the miseries of their impending captivity, which the men dread much more than their own. The tribes from whom maidens, especially if noble, have been obtained as hostages, have always been found to be the most strongly pledged. They even attribute to their women somewhat of a prophetic character, and neither neglect their answers, nor slight their counsels. In our own day, we have known Velleda regarded long and generally as a divinity. Formerly Aurinia and many others were adored; not altogether as deities, but certainly not through a mere form of flattery†.”

“The laws which regulate their marriages are

* *De Moribus Germanorum.*

† Ibid.

severe, yet no branch of their morals is so admirable; for it is only among these barbarians that we find men restricted to one wife, with the exception of a very few of their nobles, who appear to transgress the rule, less for their own gratification, than as a proof of their nobility. The wife does not bring a dowry to the husband, but the husband to the wife. The kindred and parents are present, to give their sanction to the gifts. Gifts not calculated for female ornament, or ministering to female pleasures, but a yoke of oxen, a bridled horse, a shield, a spear, and a sword. By these tokens, the bride is accepted, and in her turn she also presents some arms to her husband. Such are the deities of their nuptials, such are their strongest pledges, their most sacred mysteries. Lest the wife should deem herself exempt from the chances of war, or the duty of courage, she is admonished by these symbols at entering the married state, that she is to follow her husband through toils and dangers, in peace and in war, that with him she is to suffer or to act. This is signified by the yoked oxen, the caparisoned horse, and the implements of war. In this manner her whole life is to be spent. The arms she has received, she binds herself to transmit untarnished and inviolate to the wives of her future sons, to be by them again handed down to their descendants*.”

The boldness with which the German women joined in battle, is known to readers of ancient history. After the victory obtained over the Cimbri by Marius, the women, when they found that all was

* *De Moribus Germanorum*, s. 18.

lost, sent a deputation to Marius, desiring that they might be treated with respect, and permitted to enrol themselves in a religious order. This being refused, they strangled their children, and destroyed themselves; some by mutual slaughter, some hung themselves on the trees, or the tops of their wagons, with the sashes that bound up their hair*.

Hear me, and mark me well, and look upon me
Directly in my face, my woman's face,
Whose only beauty is the hate it bears ye;
See with thy narrowest eyes, thy sharpest wishes
Into my soul, and see what there inhabits:
See if one fear, one shadow of a terror,
One paleness dare appear, but from my anger,
To lay hold on your mercies. No, ye fools,
Poor fortune's fools; we were not made for triumphs,
To follow your gay sports, and fill your slaves
With hoots and acclamations.

Ye fools!

Ye should have tied up death first, when you conquered,
Ye sweat for us in vain else: see him here,
He's ours still and our friend; laughs at your pities,
And we command him with as easy reins
As do our enemies. I feel the poison.
Poor vanquished Romans! with what matchless tortures
Could I now rack ye! But I pity ye,
Desiring to die quiet. Nay, so much
I hate to prosecute my victory,
That I will give you counsel ere I die:
If you will keep your laws and empire whole,
Place in your Roman flesh, a Briton soul.—*Bonduca*.

Poetry indeed may illustrate, but can scarcely exaggerate the spirit that led women not in a single instance, but in numbers, to prefer death to dishonour or slavery. Perhaps, when we read of their destroying their infants with themselves, we may be

* See notes to MURPHY'S *Tacitus*, Manners of the Germans.

more disposed to shrink from their ferocity, than admire their courage. But this sentiment is only a tribute to the superior ideas of virtue we acquire through civilization. We must not forget, it is the manners of the fiercest barbarians we are contemplating; nor ought we to refuse our admiration to the lofty moral feeling that governed their character, though it led to ferocity.

Such were the women, whose praise was the source of honour to their countrymen, and whose reproach was more dreaded than the sword of the enemy. The rude barbarian, who in his own sex prized little but valour, bent with reverence to the weaker being whom he held in his power, because of her virtues. He attended to her counsels, and even her commands, not through the acquiescence of a feeble spirit, but because of that mystic and holy power, which the untutored but uncorrupted sons of the fabled North often attributed to goodness and purity.

A thousand liveried angels lacquey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt ;
And in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear ;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begins to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
'Till all be made immortal——

Comus.

A sufficient number of instances have been adduced, to prove that the wide-spread custom of degrading the female sex, is far from being universal, even among rude nations. Therefore, it has not even that feeble plea for assuming to be a law of nature.

It is wide spread, only because ferocity, selfishness, and tyranny are so too.

It is certainly very rare, to find the weak and the strong in proximity, without the former being reduced to dependence, often to servitude. In political bodies, union and energy, combined with unceasing perseverance, may sometimes succeed in maintaining the weaker party in their rights. But between the two sexes, no such union of the weaker against the stronger could exist: the tenderest of all affections, the most sacred of all obligations, unite the husband and wife, in such domestic intimacy that the weaker party is thereby thrown, each separately and irredeemably, into the power of the stronger. It is therefore, not a little remarkable, to find any combination of circumstances, giving an apparent advantage, or even a real equality to women. Two or three instances to that effect are, however, on record; whether a fuller acquaintance with the people would confirm the fact, must be left to opinion. In the account of the island of Formosa by the Père Du Halde, he relates that the daughters are regarded as the riches of the family; and that the women are left entirely free. It arises, he says, from the custom of adopting and depending on the husbands of the daughters for support in old age, instead of the sons of the family. This people had been conquered by the Chinese, who oppressed them very much, and considered them as barbarians, destitute of religion or laws; at the same time, they described them as a gentle, affectionate, disinterested race, who lived together in habits of mutual assistance and kindness.

The public rights, said to be possessed by the women in some North American tribes, have too little effect on their general condition to deserve notice*. "Savages and barbarians," says Mackenzie, "are full of inconsistencies, and notwithstanding their abject slavery and submission, the women have a considerable influence on the opinions of the men, in everything except their own domestic situation†."

A curious idea has sometimes been quoted from ancient authors, that in Egypt, the principal authority was in the hands of women. The following passage from Herodotus, is given by Gregory in his *Historical and Moral Essays*. "The women, we are assured by Herodotus, transacted all business without, while the men staid at home to weave. The men bore burdens on their heads, the women on their shoulders. The men were not required to provide for their parents, the women were. In short, in most circumstances, they seem to have changed the customs and conditions of their sex."

It would be scarcely worth while to introduce so obvious a fable as the general supremacy of the weaker sex, except as a proof, (and such it may be fairly considered,) that women in that highly-civilized country, were possessed of every privilege which could conduce either to their own welfare or that of society. "If the authority of Diodorus can be credited," says Wilkinson, "women were indulged in Egypt with greater privileges than in any other

* See LAFITAU, *Journal Hist. d'un Voyageur en Amérique*.

† MACKENZIE'S *North America*. Second Voyage.

country. He even affirms that part of the agreement entered into at the time of marriage, was that the wife should have control over the husband, and that no objection should be made to her commands, whatever they might be: but though we have sufficient to convince us, of the superior treatment of women among the Egyptians, as well from ancient authors, as from the sculptures that remain, it may fairly be doubted if those indulgences were carried to the extent mentioned by the historian, or that command extended beyond the management of the house, and the regulation of domestic affairs.

“It is remarkable, however, that the royal authority was entrusted without reserve to women, as in those states of modern Europe where the Salic law has not been introduced*.”

The opinion of Sir G. Wilkinson upon the subject of Egypt appears as conclusive as that of a modern can be. His extraordinary researches have brought together evidences of the manners and customs in that ancient country, the amount of which would have appeared incredible in anticipation. The engravings from ancient pictures and sculptures with which the curious and amusing volumes above quoted are embellished, by showing us the Egyptians in almost every business and occupation of society, could not have failed to prove the unusual power and pursuits of women attributed to them by Herodotus and Diodorus, had the anomaly really existed. They do prove the freedom with which they were intermingled with the other sex, in the intercourse

* *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians.*

of society. This, combined with the testimony of two ancient authors, (whose authority, if not unimpeachable, is at least evidence of what was believed,) leads us to infer, that the Egyptian women were as nearly upon a footing of equality with the other sex, as the nature of things would permit.

An absolute preponderance in business and authority, granted to that sex which has not equal strength either of body or mind, would be so little for the real interest of either, that scarcely any evidence would establish the fact to have prevailed in the complicated relations of a populous and highly civilized people. The simple affairs of people in an inartificial condition, such as those mentioned on the authority of Du Halde, Charlevoix, and some others, might, perhaps, admit such an order. Something so like it, is still existing in a very ancient colony on the coast of Galway, that, as it illustrates the causes which might lead to that state of society, I shall take the opportunity of bringing to notice a very singular race. The verbal accounts of this colony, occasionally reported by visitors a few years ago, corresponded exactly with the habits here described.

“The following statistical account of this singular colony, the Cloddagh fishing village, which, though situated within a quarter of a mile of the city, (Galway,) is as different in habits, manners, and character, from the natives of the town, as if they were altogether of another country, it is hoped may not be uninteresting :—

“The Cloddagh, an Irish word signifying the shore of the sea, is a village situated on the estate of Mr. Whaley, near the strand, about a quarter of a mile west of Galway ; it is irregularly built, but extensive, and divided into several streets ;

the number of houses, which are all thatched, was returned in 1812, as 468, inhabited by 500 families, consisting of 1330 persons; but now, in 1820, it has considerably increased, and is supposed to exceed 3000 souls.

“It is a very ancient village, and according to tradition was the first residence of the settlers in this colony. Previously to 1808 the streets were as remarkable for want of cleanliness, as the houses were for want of neatness and regularity. About that time Capt. Hurdis, of the Royal Navy, then commanding the Sea Fencibles of the district, persuaded the fishermen to appropriate a small portion of their weekly pay, for the purpose of cleansing and paving about their houses, and since that time it has been observed, that they have got rid of many of those contagious disorders which usually prevail in large irregular villages.

“This colony, from time immemorial, has been ruled by one of their own body, periodically elected, who somewhat resembles the Brughaid or head villager of ancient times, when every clan resided in its hereditary canton. This individual, who is decorated with the title of mayor, in imitation of the city, regulates the community according to their own peculiar customs and laws, and settles all fishery disputes. His decisions are so decisive, and so much respected, that the parties are seldom known to carry their differences before a legal tribunal, or to trouble the civil magistrate. They neither understand nor trouble themselves about politics, consequently in the most turbulent times their loyalty has never been questioned. Their mayor is no way distinguished from other villagers, except that his boat is decorated with a white sail, and may be seen when at sea, at which time he acts as admiral, with colours flying at the mast head, gliding through their fleet with some appearance of authority.

“The labours of these people are wholly confined to the sea. Their only occupation is fishing; they never trouble themselves with tillage; a milch cow, a potato garden, are rare amongst them.

“Previously to 1790 the Cloddagh fishing boats were only half the size of those used at present. From that period, the fishermen began to build larger boats, varying from eight to fourteen tons. A boat properly tackled costs from £40 to £50, exclusive of nets and fishing implements. Of these about 250 belong to the village, besides smaller oar boats. In the former the fishermen frequently go round to Limerick, and even further south, laden with fish, and also northward to Sligo. The dexterity and intrepidity of this hardy race is surprising.

“When on shore, they employ themselves in repairing their boats, sails, rigging, and cordage, in making, drying, and repairing their nets and spilletts, in which latter part they are assisted by the women, who spin the hemp and yarn for the nets. In consequence of their strict attention to these particulars, very few accidents happen at sea, and lives are seldom lost. Whatever time remains after these avocations, they spend in regaling with whiskey, and assembling in groups to discuss their maritime affairs, on which occasions they arrange their fishing excursions.

“When preparing for sea, hundreds of their women and children for days before crowd the strand, seeking for worms to bait the hooks. The men carry in their boats, potatoes, oaten cakes, fuel, and water, but never admit any spirituous liquors. Thus equipped, they depart for their fishing ground, and sometimes remain away several days. Their return is joyfully hailed by their wives and children, who meet them on the shore. The fish instantly becomes the property of the women, (the men after landing never troubling themselves further about it,) and they dispose of it to a poorer class of fish-women, who retail it at market. The annual value of this fishery cannot be exactly ascertained, but it must be considerable, from the multitude of people exclusively and independently supported by it.

“The approach of the herring shoals is well known by the flocks of sea fowl, which appear hovering with an unusual noise over the prey, in various parts of the bay : it is also generally preceded by an abundant take of cod, ling, and pollack, &c.

There are several other prognostics which denote the approach of this fishery. On its being ascertained, the admiral of the Cloddagh dispatches reconnoitering boats, with full power to prevent poachers or trespassers, until all share the general advantage of the fishing. For one or two days previous to this, the whole Cloddagh is in commotion, making preparations. On the appointed day all the boats round the bay, about 500 large and small, muster at the quay, and upon a given signal all sail out at once, in regular order, perhaps one of the most gratifying sights which can be imagined. When they arrive at the fishing ground another signal is given by the admiral, the nets are instantly set, and every boat is at liberty to make the most of the time. On the return of the boats, the women as before take exclusive possession of their produce.

“The inhabitants of the Cloddagh are an unlettered race. They rarely speak English, and even their Irish they pronounce in a harsh discordant tone, sometimes not intelligible to the towns-people. They are a contented, happy race, satisfied with their own society, and seldom ambitious of that of others. Strangers, (for whom they have an utter aversion,) are never suffered to reside among them. The women possess unlimited control over their husbands; the produce of whose labour they exclusively manage, allowing the men little more money than suffices to keep the boat and tackle in repair; but they keep them plentifully supplied with whiskey, brandy, and tobacco. The women seldom speak English, but appear more shrewd and intelligent in their dealings than the men; in their domestic concerns the general appearance of cleanliness is deserving of particular praise. The wooden ware with which every dwelling is well stored, rivals in colour the whitest delft.

“At an early age they generally marry amongst their own clan. A marriage is commonly preceded by an elopement, but no disappointment or disadvantage from that circumstance has ever been known among them. The reconciliation with the friends usually takes place the following morning, the clergyman is sent for, and the marriage celebrated. The parents

generally contrive to supply the price of a boat, or a share in one, as a beginning*.”

The morals of these villagers are represented as singularly pure, and the care and respect with which they treat their parents is very remarkable.

If we consider the circumstances of this colony, the division of labour which throws the management of its affairs into the hands of the women is the best possible. It is in some respects unavoidable; for the men, exhausted by labour, would scarcely be fit for fresh cares when they land from their boats. But the transition from the exercise of authority to the right to it, is quite natural among people secluded from the influence of surrounding opinion, and from every object of desire, except what can be best obtained through the cares of the women. The latter are the most intelligent, because their faculties are more exercised than those of the men. If this simple race could have any political concerns to transact, the women would naturally be parties to every agreement, if not the principals. It seems probable, that in every case in which women have acquired the principal direction of affairs, it has grown out of similar circumstances. It requires, however, a very unusual coincidence of events, and much opposed to the ordinary current of human life, to bring about even an equality of rights between the two sexes. In general, no sooner do privations and sufferings occur, than they embitter the temper and generate selfishness. Wars soon spring up, than which nothing tends more to nourish pride, the

* HARDIMAN'S *History of Galway*.

parent of tyranny. Woman becomes its first victim. She may truly say,—“ Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable, doing or suffering.”

That aggressions should quickly engender ferocity in beings ignorant of the restraints of religion and law, is sufficiently obvious. The effect that hardships alone have in souring the temper of the best minds, is curiously illustrated in Franklin's *Journey to the Polar Sea**. He is describing the party after they had been reduced by want of food to great weakness, and yet still exerting themselves successfully to converse on general topics, and avoid reverting to their dreadful situation: “ But I observed,” he says, “ that in proportion as our strength decayed, our minds exhibited symptoms of weakness, evinced by a kind of unreasonable pettishness with each other. Each of us thought the other weaker in intellect than himself, and more in need of advice and assistance. So trifling a circumstance as a change of place recommended by one, as being warmer and more comfortable, and refused by the other from a dread of motion, frequently called forth fretful expressions, which were no sooner uttered than atoned for, to be repeated perhaps in the course of a few minutes.

“ The same thing often occurred when we were endeavouring to assist each other in carrying wood to the fire; none of us were willing to receive assistance, though the task was disproportioned to our strength. On one of these occasions, Hepburn was so convinced of this waywardness, that he ex-

* FRANKLIN'S *First Journey*.

claimed, 'Dear me! if we are spared to return to England, I wonder if we shall recover our understandings.' ”

Experience will suggest almost to every one, instances wherein long illness, especially in those who had a right to the services of others, has had the effect of corrupting a temper naturally amiable.

SECTION V.

Condition of Women in Savage States.

The general history of uncivilized nations presents a picture of frequent and terrible sufferings from the recurrence of famine, and the atrocities of war. When men are compelled to hard labour to supply their own necessities; when forced to endure every species of suffering which the cruelty of the enemy, the accidents of the chase, or the inclemency of the skies can inflict, the attention of each individual is soon confined to his own sensations, and women are easily converted to drudges and slaves. They are reduced to the severest toils, and such as are considered beneath the dignity of the men, who soon learn to regard them as their natural servants. In the narrative given by John Hunter of his captivity among the Osages, a work, the authenticity of which is, I believe, no longer questioned, he states that the Indians regard women as an inferior order of beings, whom the great Spirit has given them for menials, and accordingly employ them as they please without scruple.

Hunter had been taken prisoner when so young,

as to regard the Indian woman who had brought him up, as his mother, and to have lost all recollection of his own parents. With the Indians he had been perfectly happy. It was after he had been recovered by his countrymen, at the age apparently of nineteen or twenty years, that his reflection was called for the first time to the condition of women, by the different footing upon which he saw them placed among civilized people. Notwithstanding the horrid atrocities in war, practised by this tribe in common with others, it is impossible to contemplate the picture he draws of their kindness, courtesy, and mutual good faith, and think them a cruel and hateful people. It affords on the contrary, a strong proof, that a great deal of amiable and tender feeling is no security to women against degradation and oppression.

The vice proceeds more from pride and selfishness than from positive cruelty. Selfishness may cease to be very active when men have no sufferings so continuous, as to concentrate their thoughts on themselves; but pride, when once it has been roused, is scarcely ever allayed. Need we refer to a stronger proof of this, than the unconquerable scorn the Americans feel for the free blacks; or require a stronger comment on the effects of that sentiment, than their treatment of them, and of their slaves? It is certain the Americans are not unfeeling to white people, but they despise the blacks; it is their pride only that makes them inhuman. This stern and selfish passion tends to aggravate the oppression of the weaker sex, whatever the circumstances in which it may have originated.

“No living creatures,” says Denham, “can be worse treated than an Arab’s wife and his horse*.”

“At Bornou, the women are so degraded that a wife never dare approach, or speak to her husband, except on her knees, or to any other man, except with her head covered, and in the same humble posture†.” At Kouka, the Sheik, who had the reputation of being a mild good man, suddenly seized sixty women whom he suspected of misconduct, though apparently on mere rumour; five of them he had publicly hung in the market, and four flogged with such severity, that two died. It must be confessed, this measure excited general indignation; one hundred of the best families left the place, where they declared no one could live, when slight and unproved surmises could expose the victims to such severity‡.

There is a particular class of female slaves brought to Kouka, whose features, naturally coarse, are so disfigured by the large stud in the under lip, (which has been already noticed,) that the traders from Tripoli or Fezzan will not purchase them. “These poor creatures,” continues he, “who are generally of a strong make and patient under their sufferings, are put to guard the crops and collect the harvest, because of the danger attending those offices, and which renders it inexpedient to employ more valuable creatures. A year seldom passes, without several of them being snatched by the wolves, who, crouching under cover of the ripening corn, spring on their prey and carry it off.”

* DENHAM and CLAPPERTON; Introduction. † Ibid. Supplemental Chapter on Bornou. ‡ Ibid.

There is great diversity of character among the various nations by whom Africa is peopled; especially as regards harshness and cruelty. In many parts slaves are far better treated than they usually are by Europeans. There, the women are not subject to any greater hardship than being reduced to slavery, but that infliction is nearly universal among Mahometans; they are brought to market for sale, and examined like beasts of burden. That natural gaiety, which seems inherent in Africans, and the gentle treatment they receive when they spend their captivity in Central Africa, prevent them from testifying much horror, when purchased to be taken to the coast. It is a moving sight to those who know the sufferings which await them, to observe them on their march, laughing, singing, and apparently happier than their owners. "It is a common practice with merchants, to induce one slave to persuade his companions, that on arriving at Tripoli they will be free, and clothed in red, a colour all negroes are passionately fond of; by which means, they are induced to submit quietly, until they are too far from their homes to render escape possible, except at the risk of starvation. If the hundreds, nay thousands of skeletons, which whiten in the blast, between this place and Moorzuk, did not of themselves tell a tale replete with woe, the difference of all the slaves here, where they are fed tolerably, and the state in which they usually arrive in Fezzan, would but too clearly prove the acuteness of the sufferings which commence on their leaving the Negro country*."

* DENHAM and CLAPPERTON.

This picture shows what human beings can be guilty of, towards those who have no escape from their power.

That utter degradation which prohibits a woman from approaching a man, except kneeling, prevails over a great part of Africa.

Park, in his *Travels*, observes, that among the Moors, women always seemed to be considered an inferior animal, and treated very little better than slaves : he says, that abject submission was considered their indispensable duty.

In describing the South American Indians, Commodore Byron says :—“ The men exercise a most despotic authority over their wives, whom they consider in the same light as they do any other part of their property, and dispose of them accordingly. Even their common treatment of them is cruel ; for though the toil and hazard of procuring food lies entirely with the women, yet they are not suffered to touch any part of it themselves, till the husband is satisfied, and then he assigns to them their portion, which is generally very scanty, and such as he has no stomach for himself.”

We sometimes meet with accounts of people, in whom barbarism and stupidity seem to have united to reduce human nature to its worst condition. Their ferocity is such, as to prevent them from taking pride in anything but the power of inflicting suffering upon others. The condition of the women is there truly dreadful.

In Collins's *New South Wales*, the author describes a people so savage, there was no appearance

of any subordination among them, except on the part of the women towards the men; by whom they were treated with the most shocking inhumanity*. Their savage ferocity is nearly incapable of exaggeration. They live, he says, to fight rather than to eat. The women are covered with more scars than can be counted. He declares their condition was so deplorable, he used often to think, on seeing the female infants in their mothers' arms, that it would be a mercy to destroy them. From the earliest age, the boys amuse themselves with inflicting tortures on every one weaker than themselves, chiefly on the little females. Their manner of procuring a wife, is to fix upon some woman belonging to an enemy's tribe, to approach by stealth till he finds her unprotected, and fell her to the ground with a club. He then seizes her, streaming with blood, by one arm, and drags her rapidly over stones, stumps, and whatever other impediment he meets, to his home, where, if alive, she continues as his wife.

La Perouse and other travellers describe scenes of ferocity not much less shocking. In the travels of Depons†, agent from the French Government to the Caraccas, where he spent three years, he gives a sort of epithalamium, though not indeed in the usual strain of such compositions, which is sung by the matrons to the young women of Oronooko. One singer begins,

“Alas! my daughter, what torments thou pre-

* HUGH MURRAY. COLLINS'S *New South Wales*.

† *Voyage à la Partie Orientale de la Terre Firme, dans l'Amérique Méridionale*; An. 1801-4. DEPONS, ex-agent du Gouvernement Français à Caraccas.

parest for thyself. Hadst thou foreseen them, thou wouldst not have married." Another rejoins, "Couldst thou suppose that, in the conjugal state, thou shouldst pass a single hour, without shedding tears of blood?" The third continues, "Thy husband will be thy tyrant, and thou his victim."

The writer then continues to describe the dreadful sufferings of these afflicted creatures, under the burning sun and torrents of rain of a tropical climate, enduring the severest labour, and not unfrequently wounded and bleeding. The husbands, meanwhile, supinely recline in their hammocks, drinking and smoking. "The unfortunate being," he adds, "is not only excluded from partaking of the repast which she herself has prepared, but stands silently by him, waiting till her oppressor has finished his meal, to feed on the fragments."

In the South Sea Islands, that lovely portion of the globe, where the gentleness of the inhabitants leads the imagination to expect the dreams of the golden age to be verified, it is well known, that on the contrary, the general depravity presented one of the worst pictures of society that ever shocked a contemplative mind. It is painful, yet not devoid of instruction, to observe with what ease gentle natures can be perverted to acts of the direst cruelty. The prevalence of infanticide has been already noticed, though happily it has now been checked by missionary labours*. As might be expected the women were extremely degraded. "Idolatry," says Ellis†,

* DARWIN: *Voyage of the Beagle*, 1835.
Polynesian Researches.

† ELLIS'S

“had exerted all its withering and deadly influence, not only over every moment of their earthly existence, but every department of life, destroying by its debasing and unsocial dictates, every tender feeling and all the enjoyments of domestic intercourse. The father and the mother, with their children, never as one social happy band surrounded the domestic hearth, or, assembling under the grateful shade of the verdant grove, partook together as a family of the bounties of Providence. The nameless but delightful emotions experienced on such occasions were unknown to them, and all that we are accustomed to distinguish by the endearing appellation of domestic happiness. The institutes of Oro and of Tane inexorably required, not only that the wife should not eat those kinds of food of which the husband partook, but that she should not eat at the same place, or prepare her food at the same fire. This restriction applied not only to the wife with regard to her husband, but to all the individuals of the female sex, from their birth to the day of their death. In sickness or pain, or whatever other circumstances the mother, the wife, the sister, or the daughter might be brought into, it was never relaxed. The men, especially those who occasionally attended on the service of idol worship in the Temple, were considered sacred, while the female sex altogether was considered common; the men were allowed to eat the flesh of the pig and of fowls, and a variety of fish, cocoa nuts and plantains, and whatever was presented as an offering to the gods, which the females, on pain of death, were forbidden to touch, as it was supposed they would

pollute them. The fires at which the men's food was cooked were also sacred, and were forbidden to be used by the females. The basket in which their provision was kept, and the house in which the men ate, were also sacred, and prohibited to the females under the same cruel penalty. Hence the inferior food both for wives, daughters, &c., was cooked at separate fires, deposited in distinct baskets, and eaten in lonely solitude by the females, in little huts erected for the purpose."

"The character of the islanders," says Ellis in describing the Society Islands, Raiatea and Huahine, "presents a most unnatural mixture of brutal degradation, with infuriated and malignant jealousy," "for while their conduct exhibits an insensibility to every feeling essential to conjugal happiness, the least freedom with the wife, unauthorized by the husband, even a word or a look from a stranger, if the husband was suspicious, or attributed it to improper motives, was followed by instant and deadly revenge."

In every group of islands visited by those missionaries, similar pictures are given of the degradation and oppression to which the women were exposed. Proofs and illustrations of the same barbarism, might easily be multiplied from every quarter of the uncivilized world, were it not that the fact is so notorious, and so little liable to be controverted, that it seems quite unnecessary to dwell any longer on such disagreeable scenes.

SECTION VI.

Condition of Women in Barbarous States.

Before we turn our attention to the condition of women, in countries that have made progress in civilization, and where they are no longer exposed to such outrage as they meet with in savage life, I cannot resist making a few reflections on the false measure people often apply to the sufferings of others.

When physical suffering is not so great as very violently to shock humanity, there is a great disposition in mankind, to relieve themselves from the pain of sympathy, or the danger of being called on for a sacrifice, by underrating, or justifying the oppressions that are inflicted.

Unwilling, I my lips unclose,
Leave me, leave me to repose.

The wrongs which people are in no danger of enduring themselves, they do not always love to be troubled about; and therefore they affect to make light of them.

“It is very shocking certainly, but the sufferers are not always as unhappy as one would think.”

“They are accustomed to it, and know no better.”

“’Tis true they are oppressed, but they are a bad race; they are savage, perfidious, ignorant, and do not deserve compassion.”

“This is all false sentiment; those people are quite as well fed as ours, they are not beaten or overworked, so what is to prevent them from being happy?”

“I have been in the countries you talk of, and seen the people enjoying themselves very much.”

“There is quite as much suffering at home, and no fuss made about the matter.”

How often the discussions on the slavery question gave rise to these reflections !

Africans appear to have a natural buoyancy of spirits : a great support under oppression no doubt, but no atonement for slavery. That slaves might be seen singing and dancing on holydays, was no proof, (as it was often held to be,) that their condition was good enough.

The same shallow view is sometimes taken of the condition of women. If the bounteous spring of joy, attached by the Creator to mere existence, be not entirely destroyed, a tyrannical man is prone to shelter his want of generous feeling, under similar pretexts to those above. In the loss of freedom, the unthinking see nothing but its most glaring consequence, the exposure to bodily sufferings. Where these are not inflicted, they imagine it must be as good as any other condition in which man must work for his bread ; and the privation of everything that gives animation and dignity to existence, is left out of the account. The want of liberty destroys all motive for exertion. To bestow the provision for bodily sustenance, without this excitement, will not produce happiness. Yet this is the state of the slave in his best condition. He must be fed, clothed and lodged, whether he work or be idle ; therefore, he requires to be urged by the lash, and if he do ever so well, he has nothing to hope for but to escape the lash.

Absolute dependence on the control of another, has always similar effects in a greater or lesser degree.

To apply this to the condition of women. They have their station in life and its accompaniments preserved to them, without any efforts of their own. It would be absurd to deny that this, under many aspects, is a peculiar advantage, but it is not very favourable to moral and mental exertion,—a truth strongly felt in the case of the other sex. On the other side, a woman never can rise from depression by merit; she is exposed to inflictions and privations, which prudence enables her to foresee, but not to prevent or escape. She has often to labour and to persevere, but cannot dispose of the fruits of her industry; and it is a poor compensation, that if she choose to idle, her faults must be borne. These circumstances are certainly not favourable to the best virtues, or the greatest happiness. And it is assuredly only a dictate of common reason, to allow to her all the control that she can enjoy, without injury to the rights of the other sex. If the husband work for the wife, so does the wife for the husband; since the cares of the children and the household are almost entirely hers. Will any one say, that the spirit of justice has ever been applied to the regulation of their mutual rights? Their treatment has everywhere depended on the accidental humour of the other sex. The mildness of an individual or a tribe may have practically lightened their bondage, under a system that exposed them to any oppression their owners might choose to inflict. Love and tenderness,

compassion and generosity, easiness and gentleness, are indigenous in the nature of the savage, as well as the civilized ; and though they get but little culture, yet they do spring up on genial days, or in favoured spots.

They also who are mentally and morally degraded, suffer less than if they had clear perceptions of their inherent rights. That acquired assent to their own vileness, from which proceed the vices of the enslaved, tends much to allay the irritation of mind with which self-respect embitters wrong. And were it not that opening the understanding is the most certain way ultimately to remove or lessen the woes and wants of mankind, it would often be better to leave them without that intelligence which increases their sensibility to ill.

If travellers do not always find women in the degraded conditions of savage or of barbarous states lamenting their fate, indignant at their wrongs, and incapable of enjoying momentary pleasure, it proceeds from the buoyancy with which nature reverts to a sense of enjoyment. It is owing to the goodness of God, that we are so formed as not to exist under uninterrupted continuance of gloomy and depressing passions. If we will entertain no compassion, extend no relief, except to those who never forget their cares, we must reserve them to encumber those who no longer need our help, the dying or the maniac. When one unvarying train of gloomy ideas holds possession of the mind, mortal disease, suicide, or madness, are certainly the consequence. As the waters rage when the storm passes, but recover their

calm when it ceases to trouble, so is the mind; it cannot maintain the unnatural action, forced on it from without. Reflection may cause anguish, but in its intervals sensibility is gone. Thus are we snatched by the hand of the Creator, from extremity of suffering, but they who are miserable whenever they reflect, are as miserable as their nature can bear.

As society advances towards civilization, it is long before the progress of wealth, which gratifies every desire of man, does more for women, than change her condition from being a beast of burthen to that of an honorary slave. She is an article of commerce, an appendage to grandeur and luxury. A train of slaves, women, and horses, splendidly attired and caparisoned, becomes the distinction of a noble.

In these conditions, though a woman may be indulged with extravagant fondness, and allowed to sport with the lives and fortunes of multitudes, yet she never ceases herself to be the most abject dependant. She may be fondled as dogs and children are among ourselves; but her degradation is so absolute, the bounds of her inferiority so impassable, that no risk can accrue to her lord's authority from any power he may allow her to exercise, or any wealth he may give her to squander.

In the eyes of the barbarian, her wanton mischief, her capricious vengeance, are but the reflections of his own terrific power. That she should acquire any self-existence, or wield her borrowed sceptre for a moment against his will, he can never apprehend. Her profusion can do little more than adorn her

gaudy prison. He has himself no idea of being great, but being terrible; or of using wealth, except in luxury; and golden tissues and strings of pearls are more ornamental hung on the living sylphs that glide through his apartments, than decorating walls and canopies.

Mahometanism may have perpetuated female servitude, as its spirit upon the whole is rather adverse to change; but the system was neither instituted by that religion, nor is it peculiar to it. Mahometanism found polygamy and sanctioned it; and wherever that exists, women are regarded rather as property than as citizens. As society advances and women approach nearer to the latter condition, polygamy, though not formally abolished, falls into disuse.

There has been considerable diversity in the condition of women under the influence of Mahometanism. In India under the splendid rule of the house of Timur, women, notwithstanding their being the property of the men, were neither insignificant nor wholly secluded. They were frequently introduced into society after dinner, where they joined freely in the conversation, though veiled. Their wit and talents in this manner became known, and were admired and valued*. In Arabia, notwithstanding the influence of polygamy, women, according to the opinion of some writers, were very much considered†.

By law, Mahometan women have many important rights and privileges, which practically are of little

* Dow's *Hindustan*.

† See Note B.

use to them, because they are secluded, and wholly in the power of others. But sometimes it has been otherwise; the general rule in Asia is to find women very much degraded, but when manners and customs have been such as to give effect to their privileges, they materially soften the rigour of their condition; and to beings brought up to believe their thralldom a law of nature, the pain of it is lessened. Whatever the consideration they may receive, however, it still seems to spring from the respect due to their owners, that is, their male friends, rather than from any perception that the rights of a citizen could be as indisputably theirs by the law of reason, as those of man himself. In every instance, I believe without any exception, the consequences of the system on the morals and prosperity of society have been baneful.

The reader who desires to see the best that can be said in favour of the privileges of Mahometan ladies, may read a very amusing chapter in MALCOLM'S *Sketches of Persia**, where both sides of the question are discussed, and with much truth and judgment, though it is playfully treated.

Lord Byron's poems have familiarized the minds of most readers with the degradation of Turkish women. Over this page of human corruption, the very vehemence of his own feelings prevented his throwing any false colours, or attempting to lull the mind of his readers into the belief, that flowers, trinkets, and perfumes, could ever stop the cravings of the human heart for some strong affection,

* Chapter xv.

some unfettered movements for the active spirit within.

The victims of this barbarous system whom he describes, are either sacrifices to ruthless vengeance for crimes real or suspected, or women born with ardent affections, who have been urged to acts of desperation to escape the tideless course of their degraded existence, where "Hope never comes, that comes to all."

My love stern Seyd's! oh—no—no—not my love,
 Yet much this heart that strives no more, once strove
 To meet his passion—but it would not be;
 I felt—I feel—love dwells with . . . with the free.
 I am a slave—a favoured slave at best,
 To share his splendour and seem very blest!
 Oft must my soul the question undergo
 Of "Dost thou love?" and burn to answer "No."
 Oh! hard it is that fondness to sustain
 And struggle not to feel averse, in vain;
 But harder still the heart's recoil to bear,
 And hide from one, perhaps another there.
 He takes the hand I give not, nor withhold,
 Its pulse nor checked, nor quickened—calmly cold;
 And when resigned, it drops a lifeless weight
 From one I never loved enough to hate.

Yes, had I ever proved that passion's zeal,
 The change to hatred—were at least to feel;
 But still he goes unmourned—returns unsought,
 And oft, when present, absent from my thought.—*Corsair*.

The tragic events on which his tales are founded are less common than formerly*. Some gleams of European sentiment, such as could pierce the intervening medium of war, hatred, and bigotry, seem to

* See notes to the *Giaour*. These feeble and prosaic lines are quoted simply as supplying the authority of a celebrated person, in confirmation of some of the views taken in the text.

have checked former recklessness of female life, rendered flagrant injustice to a woman an offence to her male relations, and authorized them to stipulate for her safety. Even vengeance on her actual guilt must now be privately executed.

The possibility of being suddenly put to death, is far from being the worst feature in the destiny of a prisoner for life. Love embittered by jealousy, rivalry, and mortification, would often make death a relief. But life without any strong affection or any pursuit, may be intolerable too.

It is surely an unexpected thing to find an apologist for Turkish manners in a woman! The incomparable vivacity of Lady Mary Wortley's descriptions, and her unrivalled epistolary style, divert the reader's attention from the spirit in which she writes. She was, in fact, a finished Epicurean. Her character was rather that of a gay, clever man of the world than of a woman. With her, love seemed rather a frolic than a passion; and it is rare, under a female form, to find so much ability and so little tenderness.

With an understanding capable of feeling even with enthusiasm the sublimity of scenery, poetry, and painting, who without scornful amazement can hear her declare she would rather be a rich effendi with all his ignorance, than Sir Isaac Newton with all his knowledge? In the meridian of youth and beauty, that she should prefer her own empire over the other sex to the grave honours of an aged philosopher, is only nature; but Circe's wand could not deform her more than the alternative she adopts

in this unqualified manner. Her senses were bewitched, her imagination dazzled by the splendour of Eastern luxury. Gardens and kiosks, from whence floods of sunshine were excluded by the dense green of luxuriant foliage, gemmed apartments cooled by crystal streams gushing through marble channels, an atmosphere of perfumes, graceful slaves, chains of diamonds, and last not least, rich repasts, were to her eyes a compensation for the want of all that dignifies existence, and renders woman almost the earthly deity, assuredly the equal companion, the unrivalled friend, of the man she loves.

It would wrong her admirable composition to garble it, for the purposes of quotation, and her letters are so much read, that every one will recollect the sort of ecstasy with which she expatiates on the luxury of the harem. The following passage, however, selected from many similar, may be required to justify the remarks made on the influence those scenes had on her mind.

“Thus you see, sir, these people are not so unpolished as we represent them. ’Tis true their magnificence is of a very different taste from ours, and perhaps of a better. I am almost of opinion they have a right notion of life. They consume it in music, gardens, wine, and delicate eating, while we are tormenting our brains with some scheme of politics, or studying some science which we can never attain to, or if we do, cannot persuade other people to set that value on it we do ourselves. ’Tis certain what we feel and see is properly, if anything

is properly, our own; but the good of fame, the folly of praise, are hardly purchased, and when obtained, a poor recompense for loss of time and health.

“We die or grow old before we reap the fruit of our labours. Considering what short-lived weak animals men are, is there anything so beneficial as the study of present pleasure? I dare not pursue this theme, perhaps I have already said too much; but I depend on the knowledge you have of my heart.”

Her letter to the Countess of Mar, dated Adrianople, April 18, 1717, contains the celebrated account of Fatima, whose apartments seem rather to have resembled a fairy palace, than a real scene, and it confirms still further the justice of this censure, but the whole of it should be read, if indeed any one can stop to criticize, while their imagination is so much amused.

In a subsequent letter to Lady Mar, she expresses her conviction that there was quite as much immorality among those secluded beings, as among ourselves, and she treats any other opinion as stupidity. “’Tis very easy,” she says, “to see that they have more liberty than we have,” and that there may be no doubt as to what she considers liberty, she observes, that their perpetual masquerade (as she styles the veil which conceals the entire person) secures them effectually from detection, whatever they may do; but that even when otherwise, the exposure of guilt occasions very slight inconvenience to the rich, as the custom is that they retain their property in their own hands.

“Upon the whole,” she continues, “I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire.”

“’Tis very pleasant (she writes to Lady Bristol), to observe how tenderly he (Aaron Hill) and all his brother voyage writers lament the miserable confinement of Turkish ladies, who are, perhaps, more free than any other ladies in the universe, and are the only women in the world that lead a life of uninterrupted pleasure exempt from cares; their whole time being spent in visiting, bathing, or the agreeable amusement of spending money and inventing new fashions. ’Tis true they have no places but the bagnios, and can only be seen by their own sex, but that is a diversion they take great pleasure in.”

Liberty has sometimes been defined the power of doing everything freely which law permits; but Lady Mary places it in the power of doing by stealth what law prohibits. It is as if a traveller should adduce, as a proof that the Neapolitans were more free than the British, that it is they only who dare to unite in banditti, and plunder passengers with impunity.

But in truth, if anything were wanting to fill up the measure of female oppression, it would be the utter inutility of those barbarous restraints. The bondage that represses everything useful, everything generous and dignified, seems to leave an unavoidable facility for a life of guilt and systematic deceit. The confinement leads to vice, and vice perpetuates the necessity for confinement.

All the security for happiness and for influence that the weaker sex can attain, depends upon their moral dignity. If those who are weak were, in consequence, usually worthless, no laws that could be framed in their favour could preserve them from practical degradation. Even among men, were it found that the weak in body were proportionably deficient in moral capacity, it would be hard to preserve them from wrong, or find even law quite impartial. In such a case we should scarcely find a law of primogeniture acknowledged, or the practice of exposing weak children confined to the rudest barbarians.

The object of wise legislation is to shackle all that is criminal, and leave free all that is innocent; and the greatest reproach to a system of government is, that, while its power of oppression is great, the way to crime is left easy.

The influence domestic despotism has upon national character, is strikingly painted by Dow in his *History of Hindostan*. It is the result of many years acquaintance with the country, its history, and its language.

“The unlimited power which Mahometanism gives to every man in his own family habituates mankind to slavery. Every child, from his infancy, is taught to look upon his father as the absolute disposer of life and death. The number of women which the more powerful and wealthy entertain, is a cause of animosity and quarrel, which nothing but a severe and unaccountable power in the master of a family can repress. This private species of despo-

tism is, in miniature, the counterpart of what prevails in the state; and it has the same effect of reducing all the passions under the dominion of fear. Jealousy itself, that most violent of the feelings of the soul, is curbed within the walls of the harem. The women may pine in secret, but they must clothe their features with cheerfulness when their lord appears. Contumacy is productive of immediate punishment. They are degraded, divorced, chastised, and even sometimes put to death, according to the degree of their crime or obstinacy, or the wrath of their offended lord. No inquiry is made concerning their fate; their friends may murmur, but the law provides no redress, for no appeals to public justice issue forth from the harem. Young men, with their minds moulded to subjection, become themselves masters of families in the course of time: their power being confined within their own walls, they exercise in private that despotism which in public they dread.

“The concealment of their women is sacred among the Mahometans; brothers cannot visit them in private; strangers must never see them.

“In the silence which attends despotism, everything is dark and solemn. Justice itself is executed with privacy; and sometimes a solitary gun at midnight, fired from the palace of the despot, proclaims the work of death*.”

The condition of women in Persia appears from Sir John Malcolm's history exactly the same, both in practice and in social effects.

* Dissertation.

Women, he says*, are seldom publicly executed; nor, from their condition in society, can their crimes be often of a nature to require such an example; but they are exposed to all the violence and injustice of domestic tyranny; and they are sometimes included in the punishment awarded to the crimes of their husbands and fathers. Instances frequently occur where women are tortured, to make them reveal the concealed wealth of which they are supposed to have knowledge. When a nobleman or minister is put to death, his wives and daughters are sometimes given away as slaves; nor have instances been wanting in which the vindictive rage of the monarch has appeased its more than usual violence, by bestowing them on the lowest classes in the community. The wives of men of high rank have been given to mule drivers.

This usage is defended on the grounds of the necessity of making a terrible example; nothing being deemed so irreparable a dishonour by the Persians as their women being even seen by strangers. But, as Sir John justly observes, "such infamous and cruel injustice marks, beyond all other instances, the wanton atrocity of despotic and barbarous power." The Persians appear, indeed, one of the most cruel people in existence, in every relation of life; it is no wonder, therefore, that their power over the female sex should exhibit its worst excesses in that country.

Women have, in fact, no station of their own, but are what their husbands, or rather lords, may choose

* MALCOLM'S *Hist. Persia*.

to make them. A favourite, by the power of her mental or personal charms, may establish an influence over her tyrant; or a woman may obtain peculiar respect on account of her superior birth, and the consequent dread her husband entertains of her relations. Habit and affection may also, perhaps, maintain the obedience of a son to his mother, which may give her an importance beyond the walls of the harem; but such exceptions are far too slight in their effects, to counteract the baneful consequences to the morals and manners of the men, which ensue from the exclusion of women from society.

Mahometan women, says Sir John Malcolm, have many rights by law, but they avail them little; "for a being first immured by her husband can have little protection from these useless privileges."

Their dower is their own absolutely; but it seems that it is with some difficulty they succeed in preserving a part of it from the rapacity of their husband, or his relations. They have also the legal, or rather nominal, right of divorcing their husband; but the woman who does so forfeits her dower, therefore the right is null. If the husband divorce his wife he must pay her dower; his usual resource, therefore, is to treat her so ill that he forces her to sue for the divorce, so that she is the sufferer in either case, and, in fact, lies wholly at the mercy of her lord*.

"Polygamy and the seclusion of the female sex, which Mahomet practised and recommended, have no doubt had an influence, scarcely secondary to

* MALCOLM.

that of any other cause, in retarding the progress of civilization. The mind is formed by its domestic habits, and every Mahometan is a despot in his own house. From childhood to old age he sees and hears of nothing but arbitrary power. Accustomed only to obey or to command, he cannot understand what is meant by individual or political freedom; and he recognises in his monarch, the same absolute power as he claims over all whom nature or fortune has placed under his own authority*.”

“The frame of private society is calculated to make men artful and false. The wives and slaves of a despotic husband and master must have all the vices of their debased condition. The first lesson the children learn from the example of the persons they love, is to practise deceit; and this early impression is confirmed by all their future habits. They may hear and admire moral sentences on the beauty and excellence of truth; but prudence warns them against so dangerous a virtue†.”

The women who dwell in towns are usually slaves. It is not easy to know much about them, but common report adjudged them to be expert in eluding vigilance, and very inferior in virtue to the Eelyats or wandering Tartar tribes, a very remarkable race; also Mahometans, but among whom the women are free‡. As I shall have occasion in a subsequent place to describe this people more particularly, it is sufficient for the present purpose to observe the contrast of character mere freedom produces in the women; for among them there is

* MALCOLM.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

frequently found a loftiness of sentiment and heroic courage not existing in the other women. Unhappily the members of those communities, who chance to make fortunes and abandon their roving habits to settle in towns, are soon seduced by the habits of luxury and sensuality which prevail around them; and the women, with few exceptions, are reduced to the same condition as other Persians.

The severe exclusion of foreigners from China, prevents much insight into the real workings of the social system in that country. In this respect, there has not been much added to what the Jesuit missionaries disclosed 150 years ago. Some considerations, however, may lead us to infer, that, practically, the condition of women is less depressed and suffering there, than in other countries where they are equally secluded, and where polygamy prevails.

The Chinese are a literary people, and they set a very high value upon wit and talents in women. Those who are highly educated fetch a higher price, says the *Père Du Halde*, than others. It is true, that singing, dancing, and accomplishments of that nature, with them, as with us, constitute the most ordinary acquirements of women; but they all read, and, from the nature of the language, that acquirement is of a much higher character than with us. This seems to have led, in some instances, to the acquisition of a good deal of literature.

The opinions and customs of the Chinese upon that point, appear to resemble those which (at least, till very lately) prevailed in our own country; where the education thought suitable for women was very slight;

but even this occasionally excited a taste for knowledge, which parental pride or indulgence encouraged.

However inferior to European science the Chinese may appear, it is impossible to deny that they are a remarkably educated people. Knowledge, such as it is, is the way to rise in that country. Books are plentiful, cheap, and beautifully printed, and their literature by no means contemptible, unless brought into comparison with that of modern Europe. It consists for the most part of a large body of ethical philosophy, principally that of Confucius expanded by endless commentaries, encyclopedias, treatises on astronomy, geography, medicine, and natural history, which are held to be pretty much on a level with European science, before the days of Bacon. They have voluminous histories, tedious, inaccurate, and trivial; tales and romances, poetry and plays, which rank rather high; the former being very faithful representations of manners, and the latter having a good deal of merit, even to foreigners*.

Among the extracts and translations from their writers, given to us by the Père Du Halde and others, we find as with us, severe moralists restricting female education to what would make a tolerable servant, and novelists holding up proficiency in literature as one of the greatest perfections a woman can have. And so far from being a questionable merit, or a subject of sneer and ridicule, the possession of talents and genius by young women is represented as making them objects of admiration and request to every one who is looking out for a

* *The Chinese*, by DAVIS.

wife for his son, or for himself*. In the novel referred to below, the hero replies to a friend who is urging him to marry for wealth. "Now, brother, do not give such weight to riches and rank, and make so little of the beauty of woman. Formerly, as well as at the present day, every man who distinguished himself by his talents was able to acquire fortune and high rank; but when did there ever exist a great number of amiable and perfectly beautiful women? If talent is unaccompanied by beauty, I do not consider the woman who possesses it accomplished; if there be beauty without talent, it is nothing like perfection for me; but if talents even, and beauty, be found united in the same person, and if her tastes, her sentiments, do not accord as pulse to pulse with mine, the possessor of them, still, is not the amiable woman Sse Yeoupe desires."

"In this instance, I think with the prince of literature, that the union which is formed by the sympathy of hearts is such as ensures felicity to two beings, even unto gray hairs; and the close of life shall still find them watching over each other."

A great part of the interest of this novel turns upon the anxiety of the father to make his daughter happy, and to find a man that will be worthy of her. In one of the moralists referred to by Du Halde, the attention to the happiness of wives and daughters, which is enjoined, is in many respects full of tenderness and delicacy. As for those, he says, who marry their daughters into distant countries, they

* *Iu-Kiao-li*, or The Two Fair Cousins; a Chinese Novel, translated from the French of ABEL REMUSAT.

cannot take too many precautions. "Perhaps you have seen a young man by chance, that hits your fancy ; you find he has some merit, and immediately you persuade yourself, that you are going to make as happy a marriage, as that formerly was of Tchu and Tchín ; you give him your daughter, you suffer her to depart. Do you think her heart has consented to this separation ?

"When she shall come to her father's house, can you hope that peace and unity will continue there long ? When the birth-day of her relations, or one of the annual rejoicing days shall arrive, when the whole family meet together at her father's house, to pass the day in mirth and jollity, she will be quite disconsolate, that she cannot be in the same company ; being placed as she is in another climate, her eyes cannot meet those of her mother ; think then how great her uneasiness must be !

"If at the end of some years she is permitted to take a journey to see her friends, a month is hardly expired but she is sent back, without knowing how long it will be before she will have this satisfaction a second time : in this melancholy moment of separation, they wrest her very soul from her body ; on the road she turns her head every moment towards the place she is quitting, and where she has left her dear relations ; her tenderness is renewed, and gives her an uneasiness impossible to be expressed ; thus, by a too great precipitation a father procures his daughter's misery*."

In the page preceding this quotation: "The

* DU HALDE.

young bride," says the same moralist, in treating of the duties of husband and wife, "has the greatest cause of complaint; she often passes from a wealthy family, into one whose circumstances are narrow; all the trouble of managing household affairs devolves upon her; however willing she may be, she is not able to support such variety of business; she perceives her husband's affection begin to cool, but dares not complain of it; at the distance she is from her mother's house, she can neither see nor talk with her; in short, she leads an uneasy life, giving herself up to sighs and tears without any alleviation or comfort; the more she has been beloved in her own family, the harder her condition is."

In the Chinese novel referred to, the hero is represented as equally in love with two beautiful clever girls, both of whom he marries at the end, to their equal satisfaction. But, as polygamy is not lawful in China, the novel is in this respect as fictitious as the German play, which turns on a similar arrangement.

The mandarins had, indeed, formerly the permission of marrying three wives, and the childless are still allowed to purchase other women, who are dependent on the lawful wife, and are little better than servants*. We find in the writings of the Chinese moralists, cited by Du Halde, expostulations on the neglect and tyranny to which these wretched beings are exposed.

Widows who have had a son become entirely their own mistresses; and no difference is made between the duty and respect paid to the authority of

* DAVIS.

father or mother. The remarkable height to which the Chinese carry their ideas of parental authority, is well known. Parents of either sex, throughout their whole lives, are treated with the most profound and reverential obedience, and these circumstances must surely operate to sustain, in some degree, the consideration of the female sex. Indeed, if their tales are, as is said, remarkably faithful representations of manners, it is impossible to deny that women are allowed to possess some station in society, and some control over the interests of life*.

Notwithstanding these alleviations to the misery of a perpetual prison, the condition of Chinese women is one of deplorable depression.

As the missionaries were permitted, though with great precautions, to see and instruct the women in the doctrines of Christianity; they had the best opportunities ever possessed by Europeans, of gaining some insight into their real condition. Their inquiries led them to the conclusion, that habit does not reconcile them to so unnatural a state as perpetual imprisonment; that the more they are confined, the less they love their solitude, and that their lives are most usually spent in miserable dissensions with each other; a state of continual irritation, with no power of separating from the object of dislike, and no variety to prevent the mind from brooding over its provocations. The effects upon their understandings are just what might be expected, in a race that by nature appears gentle and inoffensive†. They appeared timid, feeble, superstitious creatures, pinning their

* DAVIS.

† LE COMPTE.

faith on their instructors, weeping and wailing the peccadilloes they committed, and submitting to penitential practices, though incapable of the self-command necessary to restrain the only vice they could indulge,—domestic quarrelling*.

If any one of these victims attempted to escape from a man of harsh and severe temper, or whose age or deformity repelled her affections, her going out of his door would alone entitle him to punish her as a slave. Escape would be nearly impossible, for her own kindred would not dare to harbour her, and a woman wandering about, belonging to no one, could elude neither observation nor pursuit†.

The barbarous severity of their ideas is the more striking, from finding it strongly expressed in the same moral writer, whose tender admonitions in favour of women have been quoted. “Young persons of different sexes,” he says, “should not meet together, nor sit in the same place, nor make use of the same furniture, nor take things from each other’s hands. This prohibition is carried so far, as to prevent a woman from speaking to her sister’s husband, or sitting at table with her own brothers after she has become a wife. However, in this age,” continues the writer, “women and maids are seen to go freely into the pagodas, and there burn perfumes; and to go into covered barks, and take their pleasure on the water; their husbands know of it, how come they then to allow it ‡?”

The moralist continues to denounce several other trifling indulgences, such as viewing a thea-

* LE COMPTE.

† Ibid.

‡ DU HALDE.

trical representation through a lattice, things so very remotely connected with any temptation to evil, that they strongly exhibit the severity of the system.

The higher the station, the greater seems the rigour of female seclusion. "Those belonging to the emperor," says Le Compte, "were never seen by any one but himself. It was dangerous even to inquire about them. They are all," says he, "maidens of quality, which the mandarins or governors of the provinces choose; and as soon as they are entered the palace, they have no further correspondence with their friends, no not with their very fathers. Their forced and perpetual solitude (for most of them are never taken notice of by the emperor), the intrigues they set on work to get into his favour, and the jealousy they have of one another, which racks them with suspicions, envy, and hate, makes the most part of them very miserable. Among those who are so happy as to gain their prince's approbation, three are chosen which bear the title of queens. These are in a far higher degree of honour than the rest, having each their lodgings, their court, their ladies of honour, and other female attendants.

"Nothing is wanting that can contribute to their diversion. Their furniture, clothes, attendance, are all rich and magnificent: it is true all their happiness consists in pleasing their lord; for no business of consequence ever comes to their knowledge; and as they do not assist the state with their counsels, so they do not disturb it with their ambition.

“The Chinese differ very much from us in that particular. They say heaven has endued women with good nature, modesty, and innocence, that they might look after their families, and take care of their children; but that men are born with strength of body and mind, and with wit and generosity, to govern and rule the world.”

SECTION VII.

Grecian and Roman Women.

In the Asiatic countries described, the access of Europeans to society is so limited, that their knowledge of its real working must necessarily be defective. In ancient countries, time must have obliterated a multitude of circumstances, affecting their past condition. But if there is any dependence to be placed on our inferences from such imperfect materials, we may consider the condition of Athenian women as more depressed than that of the Chinese, the Turkish, or the Indian.

Under those Asiatic despotisms, history makes occasional mention of women distinguished either by their abilities, the power and influence they acquired, or the devoted attachment they both inspired and felt. This shows that by a happy concurrence of fortune and merit, a woman of virtue might emerge from her slavish condition. Nothing of the kind occurs in the history of Athens. If the reader should not have reflected on the condition of the female part of that community, which is held up to admiration from early youth, the fullest account of

it may be found in No. 43 of the *Quarterly Review*. The difference between their condition and that of women in Mahometan countries at present, is scarcely deserving the trouble of investigation, where the means of accurate comparison are so doubtful. Perhaps it may not be far from the truth, to say that their subjection in the East is more that of slaves; in Athens, it was more that of children. The Athenian women, perhaps, may have been more educated than modern Turks or Tartars; but that very circumstance, if attentively considered, since it was not permitted in any degree to loosen their fetters, must have added considerably to their suffering. Athens was the centre of learning, art, taste, and amusement, the focus of political interest and social excitement. Everything there, was life, movement, and activity. The passion for freedom was the very life-blood that stirred the heart. The narrow limits of the republic brought the business of the state home to the doors of every one. No one was insignificant, no one was passive. That small state, like a bounding ship with its peopled deck, stemmed the current of the whole political world; the swift breeze roused every spirit, every hand was wanted. Such was the place in which the Athenian women were immured, and left to moulder away their sordid existence, while their very walls were resounding with the animation of their gaolers. The spontaneous joy of the new creature springing into life fresh from the hand of nature, was changed at the bidding of man for everlasting dulness and monotony; the serious and graceful wisdom of matured

experience, sacrificed for the vapid frivolity of an old child; and the accustomed respect, which the recollection of former excellence casts over decaying faculties, was denied to the pilgrim in her slow descent to that tomb, where, to her view, no white-robed angel stood with the beacon of immortal life.

To beings in such durance, proximity to the regions of life and light was manifestly an additional evil. To teach them to think, to excite within them aspirings for moral excellence, the consciousness of mental power, the desire of distinction, could only awake feelings that had better sleep.

The greatest risks to their happiness must have lain in the strength of their affections; next, in the possession of intelligence and talent. For so cruel are sometimes the inflictions of man on his fellow-creatures, that the only refuge from misery is being brutalized. "Their understanding is gone," says South, "and so is their sorrow*."

Professor Millar gives an extract from one of Lysias's orations, which strongly exemplifies the servile restraint to which women were reduced by their husbands.

That wealth or high connexions, may occasionally have introduced special exceptions into the terms of matrimonial contracts, serves rather to mark how oppressively the system was felt.

A citizen was tried for the murder of his wife's seducer, and on his trial gave the following account of his household government:—

* See *Sermon against Knowledge*.

“When I first entered into the marriage state, Athenians, I endeavoured to observe a medium between the harsh severity of some husbands, and the easy fondness of others; my wife, though treated with kindness, was watched with attention. As a husband I rendered her situation agreeable, but as a woman, she was left neither the entire mistress of my fortune, nor of her own actions. When she became a mother, this new endearment overcame the prudent caution of my former conduct, and engaged me to repose in her an unlimited confidence. During a short time, Athenians, I had no occasion to repent of this alteration: she proved a most excellent wife, and highly circumspect in her private behaviour; she managed my affairs with the utmost frugality: but since the death of my mother, she has been the cause of all my calamities. Then she first got abroad to attend the funeral, and being observed by Eratosthenes was soon after seduced by him. This he effected by means of our female slave, whom he watched going to market, and whom by fair promises and flattery he gained over to his designs.”

It is hard not to smile at the sort of indulgence, the “unlimited confidence,” displayed by this model of an Athenian husband. His wife, after she became a mother, got abroad for the first time in her life, and to attend a funeral! It is but fair to admit that an Athenian funeral was probably a splendid procession, and not quite the lugubrious affair it is with us; but it is not the less true, that this poor young creature could not pass her own threshold without leave, nor obtain it without the

pressure of a great and solemn occasion. One is somewhat at a loss to divine in what the previous caution, he so commends for its prudence, could have consisted. But the consequences deserve observation. The first moment she is seen she is tempted, and the moment she is tempted she yields. In a condition wherein women are rarely seen, and never conversed with, curiosity to obtain the least glimpse of them must be stimulated to the highest degree. Where the state of manners precludes all interchange of ideas between the two sexes, frequency of intercourse, participation in the same pursuits and amusements, or similarity of tastes and character, are quite unnecessary to inspire an attachment. Under such a system of seclusion, a woman can have no attraction in the eyes of the other sex, except her beauty, and that he can discern at the first glance. It must be love at first sight, or no love at all. Our affections spring up from within. The less food they obtain from reason and realities, the more they draw from imagination. Ardent characters, seldom remain cold and indifferent because they do not meet with a deserving object. If they cannot love rightly, they love wrong. Those sudden and violent passions, which in poems and tales appear so extravagant to our ideas as to diminish our sympathy, are quite credible in every state of society, which limits the acquaintance men may have with women of character and family, to casual and momentary meetings. The imagination of youth will scarcely fail to exaggerate the beauty and grace of the fugitive vision that has passed before it.

To a young creature, immured everlastingly in a dull unvarying home, the delusion of flattery must be nearly irresistible. If ever shut up, she should never be let out, till age has made her spirits as sluggish as her fate. For when she first issues from her solemn abode, the commonest scenes of daily life must to her offer intoxicating excitement. A wide extended prospect, the gay confusion of hills and dales and human habitations, the busy hum of animated nature, the variety of occupations and implements, the lively voices, the rapid movements, the conversation and remarks of new people, the least thing addressed to herself, all these must appear to her a torrent of exquisite and inexhaustible delight. How like the entrance of a tomb must be the return home! With what disgust must she not view the stagnant monotony of all within! What perturbation must not a letter or a message excite within her, from one whose figure is associated in her mind with such enchanting scenes, and who persuades her, that in all the brilliant throng he saw and admired but her! The first communication might be answered in innocence, with no other design than that so natural,—to enjoy for a moment longer an emotion, an interest, an excitement.

But a vacant mind has no resources against the suggestions of pleasure. Nor has she, who has been robbed of the rights of nature, any argument against breach of duty but the fear of detection*. If the

* The article in No. 43 of the *Quarterly Review*, already referred to, expressly professes to supply the deficiency of information on the subject of female society, left by HILL's *Essays*

article referred to in the note be read with attention, it will be seen that the privileges, which may at first sight appear to moderate the severity here described, were wholly in the power of the husband to grant or withhold; and that practically they were mostly withheld;—that a wife was valued chiefly as an upper servant, nevertheless, that she was more frequently an idle gossip;—that women were held in general contempt;—and that religious festivals and other ceremonies, left unavoidable breaks in that system of restraint, which added strength to temptation. Hence, the sole virtue for which all other moral excellence was sacrificed, was not even secured, and the reaction on the morals and happiness of the whole community was baneful. Such was that polity which the enlightened and benevolent Montesquieu pronounces to be so perfect, that it would not be possible to improve it.

There can scarcely be a greater contrast, than between the condition and character of women at Athens where they were secluded, and at Sparta where they appear to have been brought, almost as nearly as their sex admits, to a footing of social equality with men. Political power appears to have been entirely and properly retained in male hands. But, except that they were disposed of in marriage by their parents or the king, when they were orphans, it does not appear that they were subject to any other arbitrary restraint or disability. This power on the part of

on the Manners and Institutions of Greece. It is gathered from sources little known to the unlearned reader, and it places the rigour of female servitude in a stronger light than can be done in this work.

the monarch was given, for the purpose of preventing the property of heiresses from accumulating in the families of those who were already possessed of landed property*. An equal division of the land was a purpose to which, in the better times of the commonwealth, the personal rights of both sexes were held to be quite subordinate. Heiresses, therefore, were not permitted to marry persons already possessed of estates. The good of the state being at Sparta instilled from early youth, as a motive paramount to all others, and alike obligatory on both sexes, must have become a law of honour; and the sacrifices of inclination it involved, must have ceased to be regarded as a hardship by any one. Knowing beforehand, that the choice in marriage must be subject to some restraints of fixed necessity, has considerable influence in preventing attachments, that cannot with any probability be indulged. A duty to which the mind assents as reasonable in itself, is felt very differently from an injustice, though the sacrifice be in both cases the same. Princes and princesses are not always disposed to view as a hardship, the necessity they are under of regarding their marriages merely in the light of establishments, to which the chance of affection must be subordinate. The disposal in marriage of the young without their own consent is a cruel oppression; but when manners are not very corrupt, parental affection is a tolerable safeguard against this abuse of power. On the other side, to leave young people entirely free upon this point, at a time of life when present indulgence is usually the sole rule

* THIRLWAL'S *History of Greece*.

of action, and experience is totally wanting, would probably produce more unhappy marriages than are caused by the authority of parents. The right of controlling indiscreet unions,—one of the most reasonable a parent can possess,—is sometimes so unreasonably exercised, as to produce a great deal of misery. But the young are unavoidably so much in the power of their parents, that it does not seem possible to prevent abuse by any means but good feeling and opinion. Owing to the freedom and consideration enjoyed by Spartan women, it is probable the young were as little exposed to tyranny upon this point as in any country whatever.

The freedom of women was not peculiar to Sparta. It prevailed in all Dorian states, though not perhaps equally; and is thought to have been once universal in Greece*. It is observed, that in Homer there is no trace of the seclusion of women after marriage; nor do they appear to have been insignificant, or much depressed. The chief difference in their condition at Sparta consisted in the liberty given by Lycurgus to the unmarried, whom he withdrew from seclusion, and whose education he directed. This seems the only instance on record, in which the education of women was thought worthy the attention of the state. It is true it consisted chiefly, if not solely, in athletic exercises calculated to render them robust, fearless, and active. But in those days, an importance and dignity was attached to such skill, very different from modern ideas. It is imagined the Spartan maidens contended in public games of

* THIRLWAL.

the above description, without clothing. But Mr. Thirlwal and the Abbé Barthelemy both refute this opinion. There were public festivals, in which the young women danced and sung, their garments being so made as to leave their limbs unrestrained. This is thought to have given rise to the above notion. On those occasions, the maidens, it is said, were encouraged in their songs and sports, to extol or satirize the men who had distinguished or discredited themselves. This was by way of rousing the spirit of the other sex, who were very naturally more afraid of the ridicule of young women, than the grave remonstrances of their elders. The object of Lycurgus, in withdrawing the young women from the recluse life to which they had been consigned, was to prevent the excessive tenderness and delicacy it occasioned. But Plutarch observes, that the whole system had the further advantage of enlarging and ennobling their ideas, when they felt they were not excluded from their share of honour*.

Whether the legislator had in view this moral influence, or considered nothing worthy of effort except strength and health, it cannot be doubted that, in point of fact, it was the first, the moral influence, that raised their minds, and caused them alone among Greek women, to show a dignity of character that makes them worthy rivals of the Roman matrons†. “It is certain,” adds the same author, “that the Spartan morals were at least as pure as those of any ancient, perhaps any modern

* PLUTARCH *in Lycurgus*.

† THIRLWAL; and

BARTHELEMY'S *Voyage d'Anacharsis*.

people; and that the Spartan women were treated with a respect, and exercised an influence, which seemed to the other Greeks extravagant and pernicious; but that it became so only, if at all, after the whole nation had degenerated."

In a dialogue imagined by Barthélémy, for the purpose of justifying the Spartan manners from the attacks of the Athenians, he makes one of the speakers say, "Learn that our daughters are brought up in the same discipline as our sons, and that they are accustomed to the same exercises; that they bring with them no dowry, but their virtues; that when they become mothers, they are entrusted with the prolonged education of their children, first in conjunction with their husbands, afterwards with the magistrates; that there are censors, whose eyes are always upon their conduct; that the care of the household and the slaves is wholly under their control; that Lycurgus prohibited them the use of ornament in their dress; and that, while those institutions were in force, the purity of their morals was universally acknowledged." Such, indeed, will ever be the excellent effects of freedom, if it be combined with education. But to account for the moral influence, said to have resulted from the education given to Spartan women, and to show that in itself it is not improbable, we must recall to mind, that skill in athletic exercises was universally regarded, in those times, as one of the most honourable distinctions which could be acquired by young men. Those exercises always formed a most essential part of their education; and the victors at the

Olympic games were scarcely less the objects of national pride and admiration than the conquerors in war. The ill effects of this over-estimate of a thing very useful in itself, has nothing to do with the present subject. It is sufficient that, by the common consent of mankind, athletic games were held in the highest honour, and deemed a necessary object in the education of the free-born and noble. At Sparta therefore, a spirit of generous emulation could not fail to be awakened in the women, by their being called in to share in pursuits and rewards, which were held to ennoble every one. As they strove with each other, no objection could be made to the practice. Whatever roughness and coarseness resulted from the ambition of excelling in strength and address, among semi-barbarians was no defect at all. It accorded with the spirit of their institutions, though it would be opposed to ours. The effect of their circumstances was to make the women bold in spirit, and fall naturally into the character of the men. The only sources of knowledge among the Spartans being oral, the liberty of social intercourse was sufficient to place the two sexes, in that respect, nearly on a level. Not being secluded, the whole current of social life tended to exercise their fortitude and understanding. Accordingly they are described as useful, active, patriotic citizens. And, so far as we may depend on the slender accounts that remain of their domestic manners, the two sexes appear to have lived together on terms of generous affection and confidence. Though the Spartans, in the true spirit of barbarism,

had prohibited literature, yet they could not be considered uneducated, even in our sense of the word. Their judgment was exercised by the habitual discussion of important questions, and their ideas were made clear and definite by the practice of expressing them in concise energetic language. No idleness was suffered—no selfishness tolerated*.

If there be any truth in history, it can hardly be doubted that before the decay of national manners, the Spartan women were distinguished for the best virtues belonging to the national character, and in private and social life held a station seldom granted to women. Nor was their excellence extinct, even during those corruptions which Agis and Cleomenes sacrificed their noble lives in the vain attempt to remedy†. The first assistance Agis received, in his bold attempt to persuade the rich to lay down their wealth for the public benefit, was from a woman. His mother, Agesistrata, one of the richest and most powerful individuals in Sparta, was the first who came into his schemes. She sacrificed her own immense possessions, and employed all her influence to gain partisans for her son, among the wealthy and influential of her own sex, of whom there were many. But alas! it argued more noble-

* Thirlwal tells us in a note, that all the information left us by the ancients, exclusive of scattered facts or allusions, (concerning the Spartans,) are :—HERODOTUS, ch. i., 65, and vi., 51, 60; a little treatise of XENOPHON, *De Rep. Lacedem.*; ARISTOTLE'S *Politics*, book ii., ch. 9, 10; a few remarks of POLYBIUS, book vi., c. 8; PLUTARCH'S *Agis and Cleomenes*, *Lycurgus*, *Lysander*, and *Agesilaus*, and his *Apotheg. Laconica*.

† PLUTARCH in *Agis*.

ness of sentiment than knowledge of mankind, to believe that the example would be followed by such a majority as to insure success. And yet the numbers, even in those degraded days, who were persuaded to favour the better cause, must have been considerable, since it was necessary to resort to a deep intrigue and the basest perfidy, to baffle the design of Agis. Agesistrata, conquered by the strongest of human affections, a mother's love, knelt to the traitor whose snares had brought her son to the sentence of death, to implore him for the boon of a last interview; and that her aged mother might be admitted with her to the prison, where her son was waiting for the executioner. With deadly malice, he soothed the agonized mother, by the assurance that her son should suffer nothing more. This was indeed, such truth as fiends can speak, for when admitted after a slight delay, she beheld the corpse of Agis extended on the ground, and her lifeless mother, (who had been brought first within the gates,) suspended by his side. She assisted to take her down, embraced her son for the last time, and met her own fate with no other words than these, "May all this be for the good of Sparta!"

It is not allowable to extend a work of this nature by quotations from a book so well known as PLUTARCH'S *Lives*. But the reader to whose memory they are not fresh, is requested to read once more those two narratives of surpassing interest, the lives Agis and Cleomenes. And there, in the characters of her who has just been mentioned, and of several others, to contemplate the pictures they offer of the

softest and deepest feminine affections, with the loftiest exhibition of heroic virtue.

In the earlier and less corrupted ages of Sparta, the sentiments of the women were occasionally tinged with that extravagance, and even ferocity, which it was the tendency of Spartan government to produce. But in the above examples, (if Plutarch may be trusted on that point,) there was no quality that would not do honour to Christian tenderness.

Whatever corruption may have degraded the Spartan character in later ages, there are some reasons for believing they may have been more confined to the higher and wealthier classes, than spread through the whole community. For it was the practice of the Athenians, and, it is said, of some other nations, to employ Spartan nurses for their children, as they were found to train both body and mind better than any others.

This seems to indicate, that even when the manners of the Spartans had become the subject of satire to the Athenians, the lower classes were both morally and intellectually superior to those of other Greeks. But, whatever conjecture we may form as to the character of a people whose manners and institutions were sinking to decay, it is clear they were different in earlier times; and that, if we permit ourselves to confound together the characters of very distant periods, we shall sacrifice a great part of the wisdom we hope to collect from the study of history. It is owing to carelessness of this nature that the power of drawing instruction from history, is confined too much to persons of more than ordi-

nary acquirements. It is chiefly the memory of the young, that teachers exercise upon the pages of the historian. They are exhorted to remember the dates of battles and the succession of kings, but not led, and seldom even permitted, to observe the consequences of actions on institutions. It may be replied, that the reflections of young people under eighteen or twenty years of age, would generally be crude and erroneous; that the purpose of historical reading in early years, is sufficiently answered, by storing the mind with a stock of ideas relating to real life, not fictions, and which become afterwards the materials for reflection; that the memory is usefully exercised in acquiring an exact knowledge of dates and events, which is very convenient in after life, when the study of history is returned to for deeper purposes; and that, in the mean time, a certain nobleness is acquired by the habit of having the affections always interested in favour of the benefactors of mankind.

It cannot be denied that the reflections of youth, at thirteen or fourteen years of age, would often be crude and mistaken. But the answer to that objection is, that, at that age, the absolute knowledge acquired is of very much less consequence than the habits of mind that are cultivated; the wrong decision of fifteen will be corrected by the right decision of five and twenty, provided the habit of reasoning on right principles has been taught. This is the essential point. When wrong judgments are arrived at (as in youth) from right principles, it is only because all the elements that belong to the question

cannot be taken into the account. Whereas, the habit of devouring narrative with hasty and careless inattention, without any exertion of reason or observation at all, remains in the greater number of persons through life; destroying altogether the best uses of reading.

Spartan mothers have been instanced again and again as proofs of the power of education; but no lesson has been drawn from them, because the fierce patriotism of those days is inapplicable to our superior civilization. Virtues carried to extravagance always leave some moral deficiency on another side, and such was the case at Sparta. But we ought not to suffer our disgust at the coarseness and ferocity of many ideas and customs in their days, (however just it may be,) to detract from our approbation of what was really good.

The policy of educating the women, so as to bring them as nearly to social equality with the men as their strength and their duties would permit, was enlightened and excellent; and the effects corresponded with it. It has been shown, that it was the moral influence resulting from that equality of education and position that moulded their characters; not the mere practice of learning to wrestle and throw quoits. In our days the honour and distinction formerly awarded to bodily skill, is more properly paid to intellectual and moral endowments. To apply the principle of Spartan discipline to our circumstances, it is the mental exercise of the two sexes which should be assimilated. As physical strength in the one case, must have limited the trials

in which the girls were practised, so in the other, experience would soon show to what degree of mental exertion they were competent. But in early life there is nothing which a boy can be taught that is too much for a girl. Rather the contrary, as the understanding of the latter is sooner developed. Indeed, there is also very much to reform in the discipline of boys; but were it better directed, the elementary instruction of both sexes might be the same. By elementary instruction is meant, that groundwork of useful knowledge equally essential to every superstructure that is to be raised upon it. It cannot reasonably be made different for beings who are to move in the same sphere and country. The superstructure includes the instruction required for the particular profession or duties for which each individual is designed. There the peculiar offices assigned in society to the female sex, necessarily mark a different course of instruction for women. Nothing so effectually cures absurd pretensions, as clear views of the interests of society, and the relative functions of each of its parts. But to bring up one part of society to have feeble health, sickly imaginations, and confused reason, is to fit it for nothing at all.

The early part of the Roman history has been proved to be so full of fable, that an unlearned reader is almost afraid to attempt drawing any inferences from its pages. If anything respecting women may be relied on as tolerably certain, it is, that by law they were at first reduced almost to slavery; but that in the progress of manners they gradually acquired more respect and many social

rights. It is a truth of great importance to women, that manners and opinion are much under their influence. Laws are not.

“We shall not be surprised,” says Arnold, “to find that the usages of a rude people paid but little respect to women. A man could acquire a right over a woman by her having lived with him for a year, exactly as a year’s possession gave him a legal title to a slave, or any other article of moveable property*.” The laws of the Twelve Tables afterwards gave women the power of emancipating themselves from his power by absenting themselves for a few days from his house. These transitory engagements were, however, considered as lawful marriages, only that they did not convey to a woman the same rights as she acquired by a form of marriage styled *confarreatio*, and which for a long time was confined to patricians†. This alone gave women any real station in their own families. By it they were entitled *matres familias*, shared in the religious and social rights of their husbands, could inherit property from them, and at their death became entitled to share their possessions with the children.

Women could hold no property in their own right, and were under guardianship at all times of their life. “If a father died intestate, his daughters immediately became the wards of their brothers or of their nearest male relations on their father’s side, nor could they, without their guardian’s consent, con-

* ARNOLD’S *Roman History*.

† *Mém. de*

l’Academie des Inscriptions.

tract any obligation, or alienate their land, or make a will. If a woman married, she became in law her husband's daughter; he could appoint her guardians by his will, or if he died intestate, her nearest male relations succeeded by law to the office: so that it was possible, in spite of the laws of nature, that a mother might be under the guardianship of her own son. By these institutions the apparent liberality of the law, which enabled a man's daughters to inherit on an equal footing with his sons, was in great measure rendered ineffectual. A daughter might indeed claim an equal share of her father's land, but as she could neither alienate it during her lifetime, nor bequeath it by will without his consent, and as he was her legal heir, there was little probability of its passing out of the family.

“All this was greatly modified by the latter law, but there were always found persons who regretted the change, and upheld the old system with all its selfishness and injustice, as favourable to a wholesome severity of manners, and a proper check upon the weakness or caprice of a woman's judgment*.”

Women were prohibited from the use of a carriage drawn by horses, either in the town or within a certain distance from the walls†. If a wife offended her husband, he could punish her in any manner he pleased, short of death. But if she were guilty of any great offence, he could summon a tribunal of her relations and try her before them. If convicted, he then could put her to death without any other form. As the tribunal was composed of her friends,

* ARNOLD.

† *Mém. de l'Academie, &c.*

it gave some security that she should not be condemned without evidence; but if her offence were proved, it does not appear that they had any power to mitigate her sentence.

A husband had originally the power of divorcing his wife in three cases only,—for infidelity, for poisoning, and for having false keys. Hence it would appear, that if she offended him grievously in other respects, he could put her to death, though he could not divorce her.

But whatever wrong the wife might endure from the husband, she had no remedy against him. In some cases the evidence of a woman could not be received in a court of law. In so degraded a condition, it seems opposed to all we know of human nature in general, and of the female character in other cases of similar depression, that it should exhibit any moral elevation whatever. It is, however, well known that Roman women were peculiarly distinguished for virtue and dignity. Thirlwal, in justifying the character of the early Spartan women, can find no stronger expression than that they alone of all the Greeks were worthy rivals of the Roman matrons.

There can scarcely be a stronger presumption, that practically, respect and tenderness over-ruled the severity of laws, passed when ideas and manners were rude and barbarous; and that such was really the case, is confirmed in many ways.

Notwithstanding their legal incapacity of holding property in their own right, or disposing of what they enjoyed without the consent of their guardians,

(who were interested parties,) it appears very early in their history, that they had become possessed of great wealth, and been able to dispose of it as they pleased. For long before the end of the Punic wars, so many illustrious families had fallen into decay, from their properties having passed to females, that the Voconian law was enacted, to prevent women from being left heiresses to landed estates, or inheriting more than a fourth part of their husbands' wealth.

When patrician and plebeian families were permitted to intermarry, plebeian marriages were allowed to give to women the rights of the *matres familias*, by which the number of those who could inherit from their husbands was greatly increased.

The social consideration they received, appears in several legislative acts by which the hardship of their condition was lessened. By the laws of the Twelve Tables, the power of divorce was granted to them as to men. Petitions from them were received and attended to, and rewards and honours occasionally decreed to them.

After the taking of Veii, Camillus, who had vowed a tenth part of the spoil to Apollo, found great difficulty in levying the tenth equitably*. When at last, a valuation was agreed upon, a fresh difficulty arose, how to procure the amount in gold. On this occasion the women contributed their trinkets; the senate rewarded them by the privilege of going in covered carriages to sacrifices and public solemnities, and in open carriages on other occasions. They also obtained the right of having funeral orations pronounced in

* ROLLIN.

their praise, and the gold they had contributed, was weighed with the intention of repaying them.

Some of these rewards, it is true, were rather honorary than calculated to provide a safeguard against oppression, if any such existed; but they were not for that reason unimportant. Women were thereby led to feel that they were regarded as citizens, not as mere dependents on the convenience of the other sex; that their virtues were of use to their country, and were acknowledged by it with gratitude. Generous minds do not always want to have their merits rewarded: they do want to have them acknowledged. Those occasional honours awakened in women that patriotism, which, next to a pure religious sentiment, tends most to create moral elevation.

The Oppian law was passed during the time that Hannibal was in Italy, and Rome in great alarm. It was directed against female luxury. By it women were prohibited from the use of more than half an ounce of gold in personal ornaments, and from wearing many coloured garments. It revived the prohibition against women going in wheeled carriages, except in public solemnities. About twenty years afterwards, the women petitioned the assembly of the people against this law, and it was rescinded without a dissentient voice, except that of Cato the elder*.

In the early history of the Roman republic, whenever women are mentioned, it is usually to record instances of their virtue, their courage, or their patriotism.

* LIVY.

It is indeed pretty well proved, that that history cannot be trusted implicitly. But if anything may be safely assumed as sufficiently authentic to reason from, it is the laws that were passed. Admitting that early historians may have drawn much from traditions, coloured by national vanity, still the events so collected, will be in accordance with national manners and character. Taken as evidence of real transactions, they may be worth little; but as proofs of opinion and manners, they are not without weight. People do not attribute a character of virtue and heroism to those whom they are accustomed to degrade and despise.

There are no traces of women having been ever secluded at Rome, and that circumstance, taken in conjunction with the simplicity of their early manners, tended to make the character of the women resemble that of the men. Before the influx of wealth, men in a small and free community are occupied chiefly abroad. They are engaged either in war, in professional duties, or attending to public affairs. This of necessity leaves a good deal of personal freedom to the women. The control over many affairs, is unavoidably confided to their discretion; and that continual dependence on the decisions of another, which enfeebles the character, is thereby prevented. They become active, and animated with zeal for the common cause.

The patriotism of the women may in itself be regarded as a presumption, that they did not feel themselves aliens from social rights. It may, indeed, be possible to find examples in history, where both

sexes have displayed an unexpected enthusiasm in the cause of some tyrant, or of institutions which we consider very oppressive. Contests sometimes arise, in which the interest of the slave and his master are the same, or from the ignorance of the former are believed to be so. In the case of women, as no change of political masters can improve their condition, it is less surprising to find their passions or imaginations sometimes enlisted in the cause of an oppressor. By his overthrow they could gain nothing, but would incur the danger of passing into the power of a stranger. The only counterpoise they have, to the terrible power men possess over them in barbarous states, is in the affection of their own kindred. To pass into the hands of an enemy, must therefore, to them, be the most fatal of all things. In the ferocity of ancient warfare, if conquest and rapine were dreadful to the vanquished warrior, they were still worse to the degraded,—the woman and the slave.

In other conditions, the nationality, which so often passes for patriotism, is sometimes nothing but pride. An insult to our country, is an insult to ourselves; praise to our country, is praise to ourselves.

It is also the character of the ignorant, on many occasions to imbibe the passions of their leaders, often with no better reason than a watchword; and feel them more vehemently, perhaps, than they do, who know for what they are contending. But the fury or terror inspired by such causes as the foregoing, though it may fill the streets and market places with vociferating mobs, or in a few instances, produce a desperate

resistance to an invader, could never form a national character of magnanimity, like that of Roman patriotism. It could not have produced that steady current of public spirit, so remarkably shared by the women, and which, for a long time, stifled every desire that tended to dishonour or enfeeble the nation. That spirit,—whatever the defects that it leads to, the fierceness, the pretensions, the injustice to other nations,—belongs not to the enslaved or degraded.

In the later times of the Republic, women, whether married or widows, were possessed of great wealth, apparently independent of all control. Those who belonged to great families are often mentioned as having considerable influence.

While Julia lived, she was the bond that prevented the two factions of Cæsar and Pompey from breaking into open war*; not merely through a decorous regard to the connexion of father and son-in-law, but from the affection they both had for her. Had it been otherwise, a divorce in those corrupted days would soon have released the fierce ambition of the two rivals from the fragile bond that restrained them.

Octavia, the wife of Antony, was looked up to with universal respect and admiration. She is, indeed, one of the most interesting female characters in history. Her great power and influence were invariably used to promote peace, and serve the interests of her ungrateful husband. Into the obscurer path of her private affairs, she carried every gentle and

* MIDDLETON'S *Cicero*.



benevolent virtue. She neglected nothing but her own wrongs*.

Throughout the letters of Cicero and his correspondents, it appears, that men were much in the habit of receiving active assistance from their wives or female relations, in the conduct of public affairs. Servilia, the mother of Brutus, appears to have had the chief influence in all her son's councils. She was a woman of great prudence and ability; but her character was not without reproach. She was held in such consideration, that we find Cicero apologizing to Cassius for having acted in the affairs of Brutus against her judgment; and this circumstance was afterwards made use of by Pansa, to weaken the influence of Cicero's opinion†.

In a consultation called by Brutus, to determine one of the most critical emergencies of his life, Servilia, Portia, and one of his sisters, were among the principal persons concerned in the deliberation, and the measures agreed upon were much influenced by the power which Servilia could exert in their favour over the Cæsarean party.

Cicero writes a beautiful letter to Brutus on the death of Portia, in which he says to him, "You have lost that, which never had its equal upon earth‡." Portia was a woman of great merit and considerable learning, which was not uncommon among Roman ladies at that time.

The Romans attended very much to the education of youth with respect to elocution. It was

* PLUTARCH *in Antony*. † MIDDLETON'S *Cicero*. Lett. 23;
Lett. 15, to Atticus. ‡ Ibid. Lett. 16.

thought there was no security for purity and elegance of style and pronunciation, except by accustoming children to hear nothing but correct language; strict caution therefore was taken, that even the nurses and servants placed about them should speak their native language with propriety*, and this must have had a favourable effect upon female education in all classes. Cicero was in the habit of seeking the society of some ladies who prided themselves on preserving the language in its purity, for the purpose of improving his own style; and the Gracchi are said to have owed their eloquence to the instructions of their mother Cornelia, whose letters, which were preserved though not now extant, used to be studied as models of pure language.

Allusions to women of literary attainments are not unfrequent; and as the distinction does not appear to have been very remarkable, it seems probable that a good deal of education was customary among them all.

To Cicero, the conversation of his daughter Tullia was a resource and comfort under every affliction†. He was almost distracted by her death. It seemed as if this stroke of fate was more than his fortitude could bear, and that nothing the world retained could divert his sorrow; he shut himself up, and refused all society and all consolation. In one of his letters to Atticus, the expression of a broken spirit is most moving. The latter had endeavoured to rouse him from his despondency, and urged him not to give the world a handle to censure him

* MIDDLETON'S *Cicero*.

† Ibid.

for weakness. Cicero, in his answer, appeals to him to know what duty he neglects? what business he refuses? who that employs him has reason to complain? But it is evident that his interest in the world is gone for ever; and that he goes through his duties solely from conscience, as one for whom life had no longer either a pleasure that he could taste, or a terror that he could fear.

The only thing in which he found any relief, was a romantic idea of raising a temple to her, and making her a sort of deity. It was an opinion of some philosophers, and one which he always favoured, "that the souls of men were of heavenly extraction, and that the pure and chaste, at their dissolution from the body, returned to the fountain from which they were derived, to subsist eternally in the fruition and participation of the divine nature."

"I will do it therefore," says he, "and consecrate thee, thou best and most learned of women, (now admitted into the assembly of the gods), to the regard and veneration of all mortals*."

The highest stations of society are not those wherein to expect the greatest number of virtuous examples, or the strongest attachments. The instances given might, therefore, suggest a favourable idea of the general condition of women in those days. It might seem at first sight to bear a comparison with the station they hold now in the most civilized countries, but after reading Cicero's letters, a very different impression remains. It is true, that besides the illustrious women already named, many

* MIDDLETON'S *Cicero*.

others of less note are alluded to, and generally with regard or affection; yet on the whole, in a state of society admitting of a daily and free communication between the two sexes, it is not easy to imagine how the traces of the social consideration of women could well be more scanty than they are in those letters.

It may be safely affirmed that no correspondence, equally confidential and voluminous, could be published of any man now living, in which the station and influence of women would not appear more prominent. Some would be addressed as the personal friends of the author, the old with unreserved confidence and respect, the young would be mentioned with affection or admiration; others would be alluded to, as leaders in society, or as writers, or as distinguished, or active, or useful, in the different pursuits of private life.

There might be more censure or satire on individuals, or on particular customs, but the letters or memoirs of the present day would give to posterity a higher idea of the characters and station of women than those of Cicero do to us. Yet we know that with us, women are by no means exempt from just causes of complaint. But there are reasons, why their condition in Rome must have been worse; causes were at work which were corrupting the virtue and happiness of both sexes, but not equally, for whatever affects domestic life falls most cruelly on women.

The unlimited power of divorce, possessed by both sexes, was undermining the very foundation of

female dignity and happiness, and adding callousness to hearts already corrupted by luxury and its attendant vices. Marriages became little more than alliances for money or interest, and there was no check to separation, but the necessity of paying back the wife's portion. This baneful license, by holding out to the imagination of both sexes an apparent facility of release, if their engagement should prove insupportable, tended to render them careless of the character and temper of each other, but could not afford the relief they expected. The marriage bond cannot be made transitory because human laws permit people to separate; it creates ties and dependencies which it is impossible to sever without misery and wrong. The moral feelings of mankind revolt against such unlimited license; hence, a certain degree of discredit always attached itself to those who had been several times divorced. But the event proved, that the fear of this discredit was a feeble restraint against the flood-tide of passion or the temptations of interest; the frequency with which it was broken through, even by persons of character, by showing they disregarded the censure, lowered the standard of morals. When public opinion fails to control private conduct, its own tendency is to sink to the level of common practice.

The facility of release from a union become hateful, was often illusory, even when the most rigid moralist would have wished to grant it. Pecuniary difficulties, the danger of offending powerful connexions, the pain and even inconvenience of a breach with families who were kind or serviceable, the

interests of children equally dear both to husband and wife, the discomfort of solitude, the want perhaps of protection on one side, and of household assistance on the other, interposed innumerable difficulties. One of the greatest arose from the necessity of another marriage, influenced not by choice, but by the obligation of refunding the portion of the divorced wife, which rendered the fortune of another indispensable. These obstacles must have compelled both sexes, in a great many cases, to endure much misery before they could avail themselves of the privilege of divorce.

Cicero lived for thirty years with his wife Terentia, whose temper and conduct had made him very unhappy for some years before they obliged him to part from her. This step entailed such ruin on his affairs, that to repair his fortune he was compelled to marry again*.

His second wife, Publilia, he appears never to have loved; his home became more uncomfortable to him than ever. Publilia was a great deal younger than himself, which exposed him to ridicule; she was also a heartless, unfeeling woman, jealous of his affection for Tullia, at whose death she betrayed her satisfaction. In the depth of his affliction, his chief object was to keep aloof from her.

Tullia herself, the amiable, the accomplished Tullia, who died at only thirty-two years of age, had been three times married†. Piso, her first husband, died; Crassipes, her second husband, made her very unhappy, and after five years' marriage divorced her;

* MIDDLETON'S *Cicero*. † *Ib.*; GOUJON and PREVOST'S *Cicero*.

she was then married to Dolabella, whom she divorced, after three or four years of suffering from his violent and unprincipled character.

In our own days we are often enough disgusted at the interested motives which regulate marriages, but in the letters which pass between Cicero and Atticus, after Tullia's divorce from Crassipes, they appear to be looking out between them for another and suitable match for her, much as people would inquire for a proper partner in a mercantile concern; the possibility of her remaining happy and respectable, unmarried, seems never to have entered their minds. It is true, that her own consent is always referred to as uncontrolled, but it must be confessed, there appears even in the noblest female characters a want of delicacy of mind, which made them ready to accept any marriage that was convenient for interest. What else could have led such women as Tullia and Octavia to marry such men as Dolabella and Antony, and that on the selection of others? It seems clear that Tullia knew the character of Dolabella, and also that the marriage was arranged for her by their mutual friends, in the absence of Cicero. He affects to be not much pleased with it; yet it is by no means clear that he had not secretly promoted it himself.

To account for such conduct, we must suppose that marriages were commonly made with culpable disregard to morals and suitability of temper, or else, that from the state of morals and manners, the want of protection must have been felt more severely than with us. Perhaps both were true. Under Tiberius,

Agrippina desiring his permission to marry again, represents to him as a reason for his assent, that the condition of a single woman could scarcely be made respectable*. If this were the case with a princess, notwithstanding her wealth and her power, what must it have been with women in private stations, when cast from their homes, by the levity or ambition of their husbands!

Nothing can exceed the confusion produced by frequent divorces; Crassipes was paying back to Cicero, by instalments, the portion he had received with Tullia, at the very time she was meditating a divorce from Dolabella, to whom part of her portion was still due. We find Cicero consulting Atticus whether it will not be better for Tullia to take that step first, instead of waiting for Dolabella to divorce her†. The object of this was to avoid paying the last instalment of her portion, now due, to Dolabella, from whose grasp it might have been no easy matter, after the divorce, to get it back.

When people are involved in the engagements incident to the possession of a particular income, the inconvenience of refunding a large amount of capital must have led many, who hated each other, to live on together. On the other side, moral considerations, such as should prevent separations, must have been often disregarded, when a pecuniary advantage held out an inducement to a new connexion.

Throughout many of the letters there appears an inextricable confusion of payments and demands, on

* TACIT. *Annal.*

† *Epist. Fam.*

account of portions belonging to Terentia, Publilia, and Tullia*.

In another view, what virtues could spring from such fragile connexions? what feeling could remain in hearts given to so many, or degraded by so many unions where no affection existed? What education for the young, inured to scenes of contention or disgrace at home! what rupture of the purest and strongest affections, in passing successively into the hands of new step-fathers and step-mothers! what a conflict of dissevered interests! In such a state of things, we cease to wonder at that inversion of natural feeling, which frequently made the possessors of great wealth consider it fortunate to have no children. Vain attempts were made by legal penalties to force people into that union, from which the dread of domestic misery repelled them.

Middleton, in the *Life of Cicero*, observes, that the unlimited freedom of divorce, instead of producing comfort in the married state, rather encouraged a mutual perverseness and obstinacy; and he quotes from Cicero's letters, the following picture of a Roman domestic scene, which reminds us of Burns' description of Tam O'Shanter's wife.

Where sits our sullen sulky dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

Pomponia, sister of Atticus, who was married to a brother of Cicero, was continually complaining of his peevishness and churlish carriage. When

* In divorces it was usual for each party to make a provision for the children of the marriage.

Cicero was going to the command of Cilicia, whither his brother was to accompany him, Atticus avails himself of the opportunity which Cicero would have of seeing them both at their own house, on his way, to beg he would use his influence with his brother, to alter his demeanour towards his wife, and at least part from her on good terms. Cicero sends him the following account of what passed*.

“When I arrived at Arpinum, and my brother was come to me, our first and chief discourse was of you; this gave me an opportunity of falling upon the affair of your sister, which you and I talked over together at Tusculum, and I never saw anything so mild and moderate as my brother was, without giving the least hint of ever having had any real cause of offence from her.

“The next morning we left Arpinum, and that day being a festival, Quintus was obliged to spend it at Arcanum, where I dined with him, but went on afterwards to Aquinum. You know this villa of his; as soon as we came thither, Quintus said to his wife in the civilest terms, ‘Do you, Pomponia, invite the women, and I will send to the men.’ Nothing, as far as I saw, could be said more obligingly, either in words or manner.

“To this she replied, so as we all might hear it, ‘I am but a stranger here myself;’ referring as I guess to my brother’s having sent Statius before us to order the dinner; upon which, ‘See,’ says my brother, ‘what I am forced to bear every day.’

“This, you will say, was no great matter. Yes,

* MIDDLETON’S *Cicero*.

truly, great enough to give me much concern to see her reply so absurdly and fiercely, both in her words and looks; but I dissembled my uneasiness.

“When we sat down to dinner, she would not sit down with us, and when Quintus sent her several things from the table she sent them all back. In short, nothing could be milder than my brother, or ruder than your sister; yet I omit many particulars, which gave me more trouble than to Quintus himself.”

In this amiable humour, the lady continued all day, and suffered her husband to part from her next morning, to go with Cicero to Cilicia; and all this in resentment for the offence of a dinner being ordered in her house, by her husband's freedman, without her permission.

The equal power of divorce must certainly have had considerable effect in preventing tyrannical control. The domestic tribunal without having been ever formally abrogated, had long fallen into total disuse, and it is rather curious that the only instance in which it was revived, was for the purpose of screening a wife from the laws. Aulus Plautius availed himself of it, to acquit a wife whom he loved of an accusation brought against her of following a strange religion, and on that occasion it is mentioned by Tacitus as an ancient usage*. But legal tyranny was only exchanged for the endurance of vices that embittered married life, and made it a continual doubt, whether to struggle with its miseries, or resort to a divorce.

* TACITUS, *Annal.*

Moral corruption was rapidly increasing. That of the women was such, that law after law was either passed or proposed, in the vain hope of restraining their luxury and their vices. Augustus and his successors, in the plenitude of their power, shrunk from the task of reformation; either they were really more depraved than the other sex, or in our disgust we think them so. Still, we love to catch at the idea, that even when there is too little virtue in a nation to preserve the fabric of a tottering constitution, a good deal may yet be found in the relations of private life, far from the celebrity that leads to danger. If in so dark an age, some examples of excellence rose to that surface, where to be marked for virtue was to stand forth a hated and dreaded reproach, it is reasonable to believe that many more may have existed in humbler stations. But it must be admitted, that when honourable fame is dangerous, the bold and generous virtues, which are the safeguard of a nation, are generally lost.

That the reader may judge for himself how far private virtues may still have lingered round the public wreck, the following passages, which present a discussion on both sides of the question, are taken from Tacitus*.

Under Tiberius, the repose of the African provinces having been disturbed by the incursions of Tacfarinatus, it was necessary to appoint as proconsul an able commander. During the debates in the senate, respecting the choice of a proper person, Cæcina Severus introduced a motion to prohibit

* *Annal.*

governors of provinces, for the future, from being accompanied by their wives.

“He began with repeated declarations of the harmony which had always subsisted between him and his wife, who had borne him six children, but said that the rule he was now proposing for others, he had constantly observed himself; his wife having invariably resided in Italy, though forty years of his life had been spent in official situations in the provinces. He contended that it was not without reason it had formerly been decreed, that women should never be taken to the allies, or to foreign countries; their presence, he said, in peace caused relaxation of discipline, in war anxiety, and made the Roman army resemble the march of barbarians; that the weakness of women, their inability to bear hardships, was not the only objection to them, but that when restraint was removed, they were cruel, ambitious, and greedy of power; that they mingled with the troops, and gained over the centurions; that lately a woman had been seen presiding even at the exercises of the cohorts, and reviewing the legions; that wherever they were, some disorder was sure to ensue in the affairs of the provinces; that they undertook and conducted schemes of their own; that they had trains of their own, and courts of their own, apart from those of their husbands; and that their rash and headstrong counsels had most sway; that they who were formerly controlled by the Oppian and other laws, now released from all restraint, bore rule in our courts, our camps, and our homes.

“A small number assented to the motion, but many more exclaimed against it as having nothing to do with the question, nor Cæcina any right to make himself judge of such matters. Valerius Messalinus, whose eloquence recalled to mind that of his father Messala, immediately answered, that the austerity of our ancestors was changed much for the better; that the enemy was no longer as formerly at our doors, nor were we surrounded by hostile provinces. Some few concessions might therefore be made to the interests of women, when they entailed no fresh burdens on the provinces, or on their husbands; in other respects, the wife, he said, is but the sharer with her husband, and in peace no inconvenience whatever. In the field it is expedient to be as unincumbered as possible; after its toils, what can be more allowable than the solace of a wife? But some have been ambitious and greedy—what! have no men ever been lured by the temptations of office? shall we, therefore, leave off sending governors to the provinces?

“You say men are corrupted by the vices of their wives; are all the unmarried then pure? The Oppian law was approved because it suited the times—it was afterwards repealed or relaxed, because that also suited the times. It is in vain to cast the blame of our own baseness on the instigations of others—if women transgress the bounds of moderation, the fault is in the men; therefore, whatever the weakness either of the one or the other, it is a bad thing to deprive a man of one who should be the companion of his fortunes, whether adverse or

prosperous; at the same time deserting those who are by nature feeble, and leaving them exposed to the dangers of their own unsteadiness, and the passions of other men. The present protection of the husband can scarcely preserve his wife from reproach; what then will it be, if they are in a manner lost to each other by long years of separation? Such is the anxiety to guard against distant transgressions, that the worse evils of the capital are overlooked.

“Drusus added a few words respecting his own marriage. He observed that princes were compelled to frequent and long absences; that he was about to go to Illyricum; that if ordered there or further, he should scarcely go with a tranquil mind, if he were to be torn from a beloved wife, and all intercourse of the children with their parent were to be broken off.”

These passages give rise to several reflections. The first, presents a terrible picture of female manners, and of the monstrous power an arrogant unprincipled woman might usurp; but we perceive that the common feeling of the hearers revolted from it, as an unjust representation of female manners in general, and testified, on the contrary, that the majority of them found affection and happiness in married life. There is a generous admission that the men were worse than the women, and that, as they have the power in their own hands, they have no right to throw the blame of their vices and weaknesses on their wives. Nevertheless, we discern, even in the defence of the sex, a sad want of confidence

in the steadiness of female virtue. Lastly, it may be suggested that the presence of their wives, would scarcely have been so very earnest a desire, among men who had preferred the licentiousness of the camp to the decorum and affection of domestic life.

There is not a more gloomy study than the history of the concluding scenes of Roman greatness; nearly all ages and sexes appeared to contend with each other, in the rapidity of their descent down the steep of vice. Under the emperors, tyranny and crime, in all their flagitious and appalling aspects; every suspicion that could embitter existence and loosen the bonds of society; every hateful sentiment, and every baneful passion, had pervaded the unwieldy empire. The history oppresses our mind like a frightful dream; it is hard not to associate the notion of external gloom with the moral ruin, and clothe the face of nature with the dismal hue, the sullen stillness of a gathering storm; we seem to behold the coming "planetary plague,"

When Jove

Shall o'er some high-vised city hang his poison
In the sick air.

In the descriptions of their gorgeous splendour and their baleful revolutions, their joys appear like demoniac wildness; their sobriety, the broodings of conspiracy or fear. To pursue inquiry through such ages would be useless; the manners of a people sinking into ruin from their own corruption, will never be appealed to, either for evidence of what is natural or authority for what is useful.

We may therefore proceed to modern times,

passing over the long period of monotonous barbarism that parts them from the ancient world, and which seems like the disorder of chaos. But during that interval, the traces of corrupted civilization nearly wore out, and the children of men, with the same nature and passions as ever, received, by reverting to original and vigorous rudeness, a new character, which has produced conditions of society, and forms of refinement, very different in many respects from the former.

CHAPTER II.

CONDITION OF WOMEN IN THE AGES OF CHIVALRY, AND IN CIVILIZED CHRISTIAN COUNTRIES.

SECTION I.

Sources of the Chivalrous Spirit.

CHIVALRY has been alternately represented as the brightest exhibition of human virtue, and as a baneful enthusiasm, which served to give the benefits of confederacy to the vices of barbarians, whose virtues existed only in romance.

However this question may be decided, its effects on the fortunes of women will not be disputed.

The least literary reader is acquainted with its leading features, through the medium of poetry and tales. Its lofty spirit, its heroic deeds, its devoted love, remain to delight our imaginations, while the turbulence and ferocity against which its bright, but desultory fires were kindled, have long since sunk before a cooler, but more invincible champion,—sound knowledge.

Chivalry appears to have sprung out of religious enthusiasm, grafted upon manners and institutions derived from the ancient Germans; for, though all writers are agreed that it was not devised or instituted by the Church, no doubt can be entertained of the religious spirit by which it was animated.

Some writers think that much of its spirit, and some of its peculiar customs, were introduced into Spain by the Arabians*. The Arabians were certainly less barbarous than the Europeans of those days; even in the Eastern countries, where women are most degraded, Sir John Malcolm thinks they had not been always so.

In his *History of Persia*, he says, "In Persia, under the Kaianian dynasty, which ended with the conquest of Alexander, courage was hardly held higher than generosity and humanity, and the first heroes are not more praised for valour, than for clemency and munificence. If we credit Firdousee, most of the laws of modern honour appear to have been understood and practised, with one exception, and that in favour of the ancient Persians. Their duels were generally with the most distinguished enemies of their country, or of the human race. The great respect in which the female sex was held, was no doubt the principal cause of their progress in civilization; women were at once the cause of generous enterprise and its reward. It appears, that in former days they had an honourable place in society, and we must conclude that an equal rank with the males, which is secured to them by the ordinances of Zoroaster, belonged to them long before the time of that reformer, who paid too great attention to the habits and prejudices of his countrymen, to make any serious alteration in so important a usage. It was not the custom for sons to sit in the presence of their mothers."

* RICHARDSON'S *Dissertation on the Eastern Nations*.

Sir John Malcolm expressly refers their manners to a spirit of chivalry.

If any confidence at all can be placed in the historical records of China, which the Père Du Halde examined, the women even there were not always secluded or degraded, but in early times had a good deal of power and influence.

In referring the respect paid to women by the rude barbarians of Europe to the influence of Eastern manners, the fact seems corroborated by the habits of the Eelyats or wandering Tartars, at present; and as it serves to introduce an additional view of the female condition, it may be introduced*.

“The Eelyats, or wandering Tartars, are very rude, so as to seem nearly incapable of civilization, but notwithstanding their wild and predatory habits, they are very honest and faithful amongst each other.

“They live in perpetual summer, as they migrate with the seasons; they are very neglectful of Mahomedan rules, and even when one of them, by public employment or some other cause, is civilized and educated, he always brings his savage ideas with him. ‘What a fine place to plunder,’ was the only observation made by one of them, on seeing Calcutta.

“Their hospitality and kindness to strangers is unbounded. The Khan received the British embassy with great splendour, and next day being frosty, the party found their horses (200 in number) had all been rough-shod by his desire. The women are nearly free, but industrious, useful, much beloved, and very virtuous. A Persian gentleman, remarkable for his

* MALCOLM'S *Persia*.

polished manners, thus described them. 'When I arrived, I was invited to take up my abode in the house of one of the chiefs, and received the greatest attention from all the family.' The ladies, who according to custom were unveiled, were particularly kind. The daughter of my host was about fifteen years of age, and more beautiful than I can express. When I said I was thirsty, she ran and fetched me a cup of pure water; it was a draught from the fountain of life, brought by an angel, but it increased instead of extinguishing the flame her bright eyes had kindled in my breast.'"

After describing the pain it gave him to depart without daring to show, even by a look, the admiration he felt for this young beauty, he observes, "A vain uninformed man, might have mistaken the manner of my fair cup-bearer. But I had experience of these Eelyat ladies, and well knew, that nothing was meant by that kindness and hospitality, with which they treat all strangers who visit their tents and houses. I believe, they are virtuous beyond all other women in Persia; and the man who should attempt seduction, would be sacrificed to the implacable honour of their male relations."

They are represented as bold and active. "But," says Malcolm, "though these women enjoy more freedom and consideration than others in Persia, they are still far off from the rank assigned to that sex, in the civilized nations of Europe. They toil, while the lord-like husband passes his time in indolence or amusements, and they are regarded more as servants than associates. Though polygamy is sel-

dom practised, it is because they are poor; any one who attains station, immediately begins to adopt the manners of citizens, and indulge his sensuality; his first wives have to endure neglect. Their influence over their sons, however, usually lasts through life; they manage their households, and often choose their wives for them."

In this account, we cannot but perceive some points of resemblance between the manners of these tribes, and those of the ancient Germans; it is in the progress towards greater refinement, that the contrast begins. The religion of the Eelyat corrupts him; the civilization, such as it is, which he acquires in Persia, leaves him his vices, and destroys his virtues. In his rude state, his circumstances overrule the tendency of his religion; drawn into towns, and reclaimed from his wild life, he adopts the sensuality his religion permits, and presents us with the unusual example of the degradation of women being worse in the more civilized condition.

This could scarcely have occurred in Europe. In the habits and manners of the Roman people, their early conquerors found not the custom of secluding or degrading the female sex. Whatever corruptions the barbarians contracted from the luxury of the falling Empire, this was not among the number; and the tendency of Christianity, whenever they embraced that religion, was to increase the consideration due to women. By abolishing polygamy permanently and completely, it secured them from Eastern servitude, whatever the forms which, in other respects, succeeding barbarism assumed. It is certain, the

social condition of Europe became worse after the lapse of time, than in the first ages of barbarian rule. In history, our attention is chiefly engaged with the ferocity of those nations in war, and we forget that neither then, nor now, are barbarians destitute of all order and virtue among themselves. Perhaps, one of the many strong arguments we have against nourishing a warlike propensity, is the tendency of war to foster the ferocious passions, even in the social relations of life.

“Salvin, a priest of Marseilles, who wrote in the fifth century, has left a parallel between the manners of the Romans and Germans, at the time those fierce invaders were making inroads into every quarter of Europe. The progress of vice among the Romans was such, that a general corruption of manners was diffused through the Empire. Salvin says, that the barbarians seemed destined, not only to conquer, but to reform the vices of the age; wherever the Goths and Vandals carried their arms, no kind of licentiousness was seen, except among the old inhabitants.” And he continues to draw a very strong contrast between the moral feeling of the barbarians, and the licentiousness of the Romans.

“Justin says of the Scythians, justice is cultivated in that country, more through the disposition of the people, than express laws, (JUSTIN, B.2. Ch. 3;) and he adds, that it is truly wonderful to find nature give to them what the Greeks could never attain to, either through their long acquaintance with moral truth, or the precepts of their philosophers, and to find the manners of the civilized, surpassed by those of the

barbarians ; so much more, says he, does the ignorance of ill do for these, than the knowledge of virtue for the others*.”

We are so pained by the vices and miseries perpetually recurring in history, that we are tempted to turn, perhaps too easily, to the hope that all may not have been as dark as it seems.

But, whatever may have been the first character of those barbarians, it is certain that they had no knowledge, no institutions, no political wisdom, by which they could oppose any barrier to the natural consequences of wealth, acquired not by regular industry but by rapine. As numbers increased, so did dissensions and wars ; as these increased, so did ferocity and disorder ; and from the sixth to the eleventh century, when chivalry sprung up, the condition of society was frightful. “In those ages, all is a series of dark conflicts and bloodthirsty contentions, amongst which the sprouts of the feudal system, yet young and unformed, are seen springing up from seed sown long before. In the picture of those times, a double darkness seemed to cover the earth, in which a chaos of unruly passions showed no one general institution for the benefit of mankind, except the Christian religion ; and that, overwhelmed by foul superstition, and guarded chiefly by barbarous, selfish, and disorderly priests, lay like a treasure hidden by a miser, and watched by men that had no soul to use it†.”

“The powerful and wicked had no restraint

* MURPHY'S *Tacitus*, Manners of the Germans. See note to Sect. 19.

† JAMES'S *Hist. of Chivalry*.

imposed upon their actions. Bands of plunderers ranged through the whole of France and Germany; property was held by the sword, cruelty and injustice reigned alone, and the whole history of that age offers a complete medley of massacre, bloodshed, torture, crime, and misery. But the world was weary of barbarity, and a reacting spirit of order was born from the very bosom of confusion*.”

The disagreement about the influence of chivalry, appears to arise very much from comparing its morals with those of the civilized and enlightened. The very comparison is a tribute to its merits; its true character is that of the brightest fruit that ever sprung from barbarism. “The spirit of chivalry, like a flame struck from the hard steel and the dull flint, was kindled into sudden light, by the savage cruelty of the nobles, and the heavy barbarity of the people†.”

SECTION II.

Rise and Manners of Chivalry.

The precise time and manner in which chivalry was instituted have never been ascertained,—circumstances of no great moment to the present subject. It is its effects on the condition of women, and not its origin, we desire to examine.

All writers‡ are agreed, that knighthood as an order existed from the earliest times of the kingdoms which sprung from the ruin of the Roman Empire;

* JAMES.

† Ibid.

‡ ST. PALAYE; MILLS;

JAMES; SCOTT.

having arisen so naturally from the customs of the ancient Germans, that the resemblance must strike every one who is acquainted with both. But there are no traces of a union of knights for the purposes which distinguish chivalry, before the eleventh century, when it is found formed.

“The knight’s vow (says St. Palaye) pledged him to duties, that might be owned with pride by the wisest and most virtuous philosophers and legislators:—to strict inviolable veracity and fidelity, to defend widows and orphans, never to endure slander of a woman, and to redress the wrongs of the oppressed, of whatever rank, age, or sex*.”

“In the Council of Clermont, which authorized the first crusade, it is declared, that every person of noble birth, on attaining twelve years of age, should take a solemn oath before the bishop of his diocese, to defend to the uttermost widows and orphans; that women of noble birth, whether married or single, should enjoy his especial care, and that nothing should be wanting in him to render travelling safe, and destroy tyranny. In this decree we may observe, that all the humanities of chivalry were sanctioned by legal and ecclesiastical power; and that it was intended they should be spread over the whole face of Christendom, in order to check the barbarism and ferocity of the times†.”

Soon it came to be called the Holy Order; and Mr. Mills observes, very justly, that, though its forms were martial, its objects were social and religious.

* ST. PALAYE, *Mem. sur l’Ancienne Chivalerie*.

† MILLS’ *History of Chivalry*.

All the writers, before referred to, deny that the order was devised by the Church, notwithstanding its appellation. They are unanimous in the opinion, that it sprung from the bosom of society, though it became connected with religion; partly, because the spirit of the times was to connect everything with religion, and partly, because the clergy could not but see the advantage of becoming the heads of an institution, so calculated to repress the general disorder. Nor could they fail to perceive that it tended to increase their own power.

Still the paradox remains unsolved, how ideas so pure and so lofty could spring from the bosom of a society pervaded by flagitious vice, or be seconded by "barbarous, selfish, and disorderly priests."

No one has unfolded the subject so well as M. Guizot, in his admirable works upon civilization; he has displayed the several, and frequently discordant, elements that were at work in society during the dark ages*. He observes that, in the ancient world, one predominating principle was usually found pervading both the social and political institutions of each people, giving to each a common character, and a unity of object and action, to which other principles were obliged both to conform and to partake more or less of its influence. But the multitudes congregated together in the dark ages, by the fate of battle or some other accident, were under influences a great deal more numerous and more inconsistent, than ever could have existed together in former ages; and there was no one of those

* GUIZOT, *Sur la Civilisation en Europe*, passim.

influences powerful and enlightened enough to preponderate over the others, and give a general character to society. There was scarcely anything that deserved the name of organization. Thus, the wild ideas of the barbarians, which made liberty consist in mere personal independence, were gradually raising up turbulent chiefs, who acknowledged no duty but some military allegiance or aid to a nominal king; in a word, the *feudal* chiefs. They were the principal feature in society. At the same time, ideas derived from the refined legislative knowledge of the Romans, were found occasionally giving birth to excellent laws, as those of the Visigoths. In other directions, privileged towns with very good social institutions had sprung up, in imitation of the municipalities, which, during the decay of the Roman Empire, had established themselves in several parts and preserved their independence. These dissimilar systems, the enlightened and the barbarous, were all working, not indeed together, (for men were acting independently, and without any regard to each other,) but frequently in the same country, and at the same time. In the midst was another institution, the Church, complete in itself as a separate body, and self-governed; in its relations with the rest of society, it was more influential than any other power, except brute force; it was alone possessed of knowledge and learning; its moral ideas, therefore, were drawn from sources far higher and purer than any that surrounding circumstances could have supplied.

To the Church M. Guizot gives the credit of

having constantly and earnestly laboured to introduce moral order, and restrain ferocity. The vices and ignorance of the clergy were certainly very great; nevertheless, as a body, many of them retained the spirit of their profession; they possessed the knowledge of what society should be, and laboured to disseminate it. By them, the ideas and principles of order and virtue were maintained in men's minds, though they were forgotten in their actions; indirectly, therefore, it is to them that were owing those ideas and feelings which gave birth to chivalry. If men were frequently engaged in warlike adventures, which drove the precepts of virtue from their minds, women were probably much more uniformly under religious influence. It was at this barbarous period that the great change in their condition began, and it is accounted for in the most satisfactory manner, I have yet found, by M. Guizot.

Before the eleventh century, (and, indeed, for long after,) everybody lived in a fortification; towns, churches, monasteries, knights' houses, every habitation, whether designed for one or for many, was always constructed for defence*. The first change in the circumstances of the barbarians, which converted the member of a little community into a landed proprietor, led to the formation of those isolated fortresses, above called the knights' houses. Nothing could surpass the loneliness of such situations. No condition to which the name of society could be given, ever consisted of so few

* *Civilisation en France.*

elements as that of its inmates; in no other circumstances were the husband and wife, with their children, ever thrown so completely together, without any resource but in each other. Out of doors there were none but the serfs who cultivated the soil, within, none but the servants of various descriptions,—seneschals, marshals, falconers, butlers, cup-bearers, and mere menials. The wars and marauding exploits, which crowded together in history appear to us as if they never ceased, really left gaps and intervals, intolerably tedious to men who had no other employment. The knight had no politics, no literature, and, as we have seen, no society; he did not cultivate his own ground; he had no one interest within his own walls, except what he could find in his wife and children. In whatever situation men may be placed, says M. Guizot, you will find the moral sentiments which correspond to it more or less developed. Those castles, however we may estimate their owners, whether as barbarians or ruffians, contained a principle of civilization; they were favourable to the growth of domestic affections. They gave importance to women; they revived and nurtured the predisposition to respect and protect them, which the barbarians inherited from their ancestors, however defaced it may have been by ferocity and corruption*.

The monotony of this life was severely felt by the owner of the castle, and no doubt it added an incitement to his love of adventure,—a word nearly synonymous with pillage and cruelty; but when he

* Ibid.

returned, other feelings revived and combated his ferocity; every effort seems to have been made to people and animate the solitude of these homes. As wealth increased, dignity and importance were given to domestic officers. The offices of seneschal, marshal, and many others, were granted in fee and became hereditary; vassals gathered round the little court, and it became the custom for them to send their sons there to be educated. But the importance of the mistress of the castle and her daughters increased with the number and dignity of her lord's retainers, and he still had no perfect equal, no one whose interests were quite identified with his own, but her's and his children's. Nor was this all; whenever he went from home, she remained there in a situation very different from that usually held by women; she was a sovereign mistress, representing her husband, and charged in his absence with the defence of the castle. The power thus frequently devolving upon women gave them a courage, a dignity, and a splendour, they had seldom displayed in other conditions. This, adds M. Guizot, powerfully contributed to their moral and social progress; a great and salutary revolution took place in their condition between the ninth and twelfth centuries, though it is impossible, for want of documents, to follow the steps of the change. But it is evident, that in the eleventh century the condition of women was completely altered; family interests had sprung up, and the domestic ideas and sentiments which belong to them had acquired a strength unknown before.

To any one who has not considered the character

of the age, those sentiments appear almost incompatible with its dreadful licentiousness and ferocity; yet it is certain that both existed,—the virtues and the vice*. Two influences of the most opposite nature were acting at the same time in society,—the passion for war and adventure, and the spirit of domestic life. M. Guizot illustrates his subject by an extract from the life of Guibert de Nogent, (who lived in the beginning of the twelfth century,) to show the refinement and delicacy combined with dignity, which the character of women could exhibit in those days; and the passionate tenderness of connubial affection. His mother, a woman of great beauty, was left a widow by the death of a husband whom she had loved with such perfect devotion, that the remembrance of him, in all her subsequent life, seemed the sole moving principle of her actions. He never seemed out of her thoughts, for she referred every thing to him; and even while she seemed abstracted and musing, her lips were unconsciously sounding his name. She spent her life and her income in works of benevolence, and attending to the education of Guibert. She gave him a grammar-master, who attended to him with great vigilance, but was very severe. One day his mother discovered by the marks on his arms that he had been cruelly beaten; she burst into tears, and told him, she would rather give up his learning altogether than permit him to suffer so much. The little boy, however, whose ambition had been strongly excited, and who loved his master notwithstanding his severity,

* *Civil. en France.*

declared to his mother, he would rather die than give up his learning. This tenderness in her nature appeared in every part of her conduct and demeanour, and in nothing more than the unaffected pain it gave her, to hear any calumny or reproach cast upon women, less severe in their conduct than herself. It is curious to contrast this character with that of Spartan mothers, where the ideas were entirely martial. In Sparta, the formation of a martial spirit was the predominating principle, to which every affection, and every other virtue, was taught to bend; it is an instance of the uniform simplicity of purpose, which, according to M. Guizot, pervaded ancient forms of civilization.

The characters now under consideration, were the product of influences very much opposed to the general spirit of government and society at the time; first, that of the Gospel, which, wherever it could penetrate, inculcated purity and meekness; second, that resulting from the mode of life in the feudal castle. These influences were creating the domestic and peaceful virtues in the midst of a general ferocity, greater than the Spartan.

Besides the wealth and territorial possessions of the feudal nobles, every knight in the days of chivalry was a judge: it became his duty to be acquainted with law, and he could generally enforce by his power the execution of his sentence. He took precedence of every one not of his order, whatever his rank; he was distinguished by the exclusive privilege of wearing scarlet. As every knight (at least in most countries) had the power of

creating other knights, and of attaching pages and squires to his person in any number he could maintain, he had the power, through these means, of making himself formidable*.

“At twelve years of age, youths were placed as pages at the abode of some knight, where they were to be instructed in all the exercises required in after life to form an accomplished knight, and to attend upon ladies as a sort of superior beings, to whom adoration and obsequious service were due, rather than as ministering to the service of human creatures like himself. The most modest demeanour, the most profound respect was to be observed in the presence of their fair idols. Thus, the veneration due to the female character was taught to the acolyte of chivalry, by his being placed so near female beauty, yet prohibited the familiarity which might discover female weakness. Love frequently mingled with this early devotion.

“But it was not enough that the very perfect gentle knight should reverence the fair sex in general; it was essential to his character that he should select as the object of his choice, a ladye love to be the polar star of his thoughts, the mistress of his affections, and the directress of his actions; in her service, he was to observe the duties of loyalty, faith, secresy, and reverence. Without such an empress of his heart, a knight, in the phrase of the times, was a ship without a rudder, a horse without a bridle, a sword without a hilt, a being in short without that ruling guidance and intelligence, which

* ST. PALAYE.

ought to inspire his bravery and direct his actions*.”

“In his mind, woman was a being of mystic power. In the forests of Germany her voice had been listened to like that of the spirit of the woods:”
 “and when chivalry was formed into a system, the same idea of something supernaturally powerful in her character, threw a shadowy and serious character over the softer feelings, and she was revered as well as loved. While this devotedness of soul to woman’s charms appeared in his general intercourse with the sex, in a demeanour of homage, in a grave and stately politeness, his ladye love he regarded with religious constancy.”

“This adoration of her sustained him through all the perils that lay between him and his heart’s desire; it was sustained by the common feelings of society. They who had it not affected it, and the prejudices of the times made an equal adoration of valour the chief object of women’s adoration and love; so that the knight’s love for his mistress, was in a manner identified with his love of glory, his hopes of distinction, and his personal interests. He who was not a soldier was nothing†.”

Women presided at the tournaments, they were the judges of valour and distributed the prizes.

Battles were sometimes suspended, to let two knights contest in arms the beauty and virtue of their mistresses. They signed her name with their dying hand‡. They attached the most serious im-

* Supp. to *Ency. Brit.*, art. Chivalry, by SCOTT.
Chivalry.

† MILLS’

‡ ST. PALAYE.

portance to the trifling articles received from her as tokens of her favour, and placed them in the most conspicuous part of the shield or lance ; these, if lost or torn in battle, were frequently renewed by the lady to save her knight's disgrace. Henry IV. besieging Dreux, received a visit from his cousin the Duchesse de Guise, on which occasion he showed her, with great exultation, two favours in his hat which he had won from their wearers. " You have got none from my husband," said the duchess ; " Because we did not meet in arms," answered Henry ; " True," replied she, " God has saved you from him."

Mr. Hallam, who attributes great moral influence to the institution of chivalry, thinks that knight-errantry never could have existed except in romance*, and yet, when the circumstances of the times are considered, much of its extravagance disappears. Its poetic colouring must of course be allowed for, but in a state of society, in which no one was safe who had anything to lose, where law could do little for the widow and orphan against a feudal oppressor at the head of his troops, where war was the chief business of life, and the principles of government were ill understood, there the tendency of society was to separate into two classes, oppressors and slaves. In this conjuncture, it does not seem improbable, that the chivalric enthusiasm of the day should have led idle and high-spirited individuals to travel about, seeking for wrongs to redress, to establish a name for themselves, and enjoy the agreeable

* HALLAM'S *Hist. Middle Ages*.

amusement of being received with distinction at the castle of every noble they passed. Such might be the prototype of the knights of romance. The deeds of chivalry occupied the attention of every one, whether within reach of its assistance or not; its dignified and generous sentiments were conveyed by the women throughout every part of society, thereby raising up a standard of opinion, to which all who aspired to excellence would strive to conform.

Thus it becomes probable that chivalry, notwithstanding the general depravity, must have produced many characters of real excellence, and that their influence, wherever it extended, must have counteracted the tendency of surrounding barbarism.

Guibert de Nogent in the preface to his *History of the Crusades*, apologizes much for the imperfections of his style, in an age in which he speaks of the attention to letters as a passion. The literary education of women, says Mills, consisted in general of little more than to learn the prayers of the church, to sing one or two little pieces of sacred poetry, and to play on the harp. But they were taught to practise a little medicine and surgery, they were well versed in domestic arts, and are said sometimes to have learnt other sciences: the opportunities for which, must however have been few. They were instructed to be humble, courteous, and to preserve a staid and grave demeanour, "not turning their heads here and there." But their chief education was from their circumstances. The adoration they received tended to maintain the reserved and stately deportment which was instilled into them from

youth, and which in itself had a tendency to preserve that stainless purity held in so much honour; for the right of the lady to be defended by her knight, depended on her conduct being unimpeachable. The Chevalier de la Tour, in a discourse, addressed to his daughters after the dignity and severity of chivalry had been much relaxed, tells them, that he had himself been acquainted with some of those, whose youth had been formed by the society of persons trained up in the ancient manner; and who bore testimony to the stern propriety, which in their day had governed the conduct of the women. The ideas of the times permitted the most marked distinction to be made between ladies whose reputation was unstained, and those whose conduct was liable to reproach. The chevalier gives his daughters an instance of a knight compelling a lady to yield precedence to one her inferior in rank, announcing to her without the least circumlocution that he did so, because the reputation of the latter had never been impeached. "Now by God's grace," continues he, "we make no difference in our address to either; 'tis all one, and yet I think the old honesty was better, for though we treat the guilty well to their faces, we repay them for it behind their backs*."

Whatever we may think of the tone of manners that could permit such rough rebukes, the effect of unvarnished contempt exhibited towards the guilty cannot but have been favourable to morals. What brow could brave it? especially when brought into

* ST. PALAYE.

contrast with the general adoration which women received. Upheld in such a manner by the spirit of society, certain of respect and admiration for their virtues and accomplishments, and called by the other sex to participate in the glory or prosperity of their country or their party, even the vanity of women was enlisted on the side of virtue, and the interest of great affairs tended to withdraw them from frivolity. They seem to have participated in the character of the men; they caught the enthusiasm for war, and are described as being frequently expert in the use of arms, which they practised amongst themselves for amusement. In real warfare, when called by the events of the times to act in the absence of their husbands or sons, they were, not unfrequently, as bold as the other sex, and appear to have known nearly as well what was fit to be done. Jeanne de Montfort, countess of Bretagne, was said to have "the courage of a man, and the heart of a lion." The skill and prudence of Philippa, queen of Edward III., are well known, and the chronicles and memoirs of the times abound with instances of a similar nature, which fully exemplify the effects of opinion in moulding the characters of women.

In our day, very different and much juster ideas of feminine merit and qualifications prevail. It never can be for the advantage of women to make them feeble competitors with the other sex, in professions and duties which require masculine powers; it never can be expedient to educate the whole sex for such offices, merely because accidents very un-

usual may, now and then, call on a woman to defend a fortress, or conduct a political enterprise. A generous spirit and a sound judgment, which should be the aim of all education, whether of male or female, will enable women as well as men, to direct their abilities, on the spur of occasion, to new and unexpected exertions. But on the whole, it is less for the interest of society, that a few women should display remarkable ability in very unusual situations, than that the whole sex should be brought up in that cast of mind which produces a steady and uniform current of usefulness. But our business at present is to sketch the condition of women at different times, as we believe they really were, and not as they ought to be.

The martial cast of character appears to have risen naturally enough from the enthusiasm of the age, when conversation could have possessed few subjects of interest, except military exploits: and the tournament was the scene of triumph to woman, quite as much as to man. But it was even more conspicuous in Arabia, from whence the manners of chivalry are thought to have derived so much impulse.

It has been already stated, that from early times women in Arabia were possessed of many rights; they could hold property during life, independent of all control, and bequeath it as they pleased at death.

The authority of Mr. Richardson*, from whom this is taken, is not unimpeachable, but the above

* *Dissertation on Eastern Nations.*

rights seem to have been common to Mahometan women in most countries. Lady Mary Wortley, in a letter already quoted, assigns as one reason for her whimsical defence of the female condition in Turkey, that women have the uncontrolled disposal of their own property. Sir John Malcolm confirms the fact that legal rights are generally held by Mahometan women, but which, in Persia, are practically rendered unavailing, by the tyrannous subjection to which they are reduced. This does not appear to have been the case in Arabia; if the Arabian tales are in any material respect indicative of manners, women were not without social consideration.

It was customary for Arabian women to attend their husbands and relatives to the field of battle, where, according to Gibbon, they rode and fought like the Amazons of old. He thinks that women were regularly enlisted. In the battle of Yermuk, fought in the year 636, between the Greeks and Arabians, he relates that the Arabians being several times repulsed, the battle was three times restored by the women.

These facts being established by Gibbon, I shall not scruple to add some circumstances from Richardson, whose account, as he was writing expressly in illustration of manners, is much more particular.

“The women,” he says, “were in general excellent archers, and watched every opportunity of avenging the death of their friends. The Governor of Damascus, having killed an Arabian of distinction, his wife, who was fighting by his side, shot an arrow which unluckily missed him, but killed his

standard-bearer ; with a second she wounded him in the eye, and compelled him to leave the field."

In the battle of Yermuk, when the flying troops were stopped and compelled to return, by the alternate reproaches and encouragement of the women, it is said, that a woman of rank, seeing a leader disposed for flight, knocked him down with a tent-pole, exclaiming to the troops, "Advance ! Paradise is before your face, hell fire at your back !" "The chief women," says Richardson, "took the command of the retreating troop, and made head against the enemy, till night parted the combatants. Next day they were led on to the attack by a young woman named Khaula ; in leading the van, she was struck to the ground by a Greek, when one of her companions named Wafeira struck off his head at a blow, and brought the heroine off. Animated by this behaviour, the Arabians became invincible ; the Greeks were disheartened and routed with great slaughter." This seems to have been an excellent way to win an Arabian heart, for Khaula was soon after married to the caliph. The chief value of these relations is, that they are evidence of the ideas and opinions of the times. They had probably some foundation. We know there were female crusaders ; and the readers of Tasso and Ariosto will be inclined to believe, that some of their pictures are taken from adventures and manners not very dissimilar from the preceding.

There is, however, no room to think the arts of coquetry were entirely neglected through the attention given by women to military affairs. Their mar-

riages were splendid to profusion; and their refinements in dress seem to vie with those of modern luxury.

Richardson, from whom these particulars are extracted, enumerates twenty-six different articles for the toilet, consisting of every imaginable cosmetic and paint, and of many things, the purposes of which cannot now be guessed. Beside these, he gives the names of nearly as many more trinkets and ornaments of every sort for the person.

If language be admitted as any test of the feelings of a people, never was love anywhere so violent or so fatal. They have seven expressions for being in love, signifying severally to be "distracted," "insane," "desperate," "furious," "frantic," "melancholy," "mad with love," another, implying "blind with the madness of love," another, "death from love," and lastly, "the captive of love;" that is, one who submits to slavery or the meanest employments, to have an opportunity of serving his mistress.

In all this the chivalrous spirit is apparent which, wherever it existed, must have tended much to counteract the withering influence of Eastern manners on the dignity and happiness of women. But polygamy alone is too decisive a proof of female degradation, to let us consider the Arabian condition was an absolute exception to the general rule.

The Arabians carried their consideration for women into Spain, where, from their poetry, their chivalrous character, and other circumstances, it appears certain that women were admitted to a great deal of social importance, and often enthusiastically

beloved. But still the power their fathers and husbands had over them, must have been terrible; and their seclusion, if less absolute than in Eastern harems, was at least sufficient to leave them much at the mercy of their lords. When we consider that in Christian Spain, women for a long time were held subject to more restraint, than in any other part of Europe, it is hardly possible not to infer that the manners of the Spaniards had in that respect received some tincture from those of their Arabian masters. Practically, perhaps, this state may have been happier for the women who were the property of the comparatively civilized Arabians, and quite in their power, than the condition of those who, with nominal freedom, were exposed to the aggressions of the then ferocious Christians.

There are not many reverses in the progress of society, that the reader of history is more disposed to lament, than the expulsion of the Moors from Spain. They had diversified the face of that country with noble monuments of art and industry; their minds were given, as we have seen, to literature, which, however we may esteem it when compared with our own, commands our admiration when we view its effects on their policy in Spain. Among them, Mahometanism seems to have lost its stationary and illiberal character.

“No one who considers of what elements the Christian population of Spain was originally composed, and in what shapes the mind of nations, every way kindred to that population, was expressed during the Middle Ages, can have any doubt that

great and remarkable influence was exerted over Spanish thought and feeling, and, therefore, over Spanish language and poetry, by the influx of those Oriental tribes, that occupied for seven long centuries the fairest provinces of the Peninsula. Spain, although of all the provinces which owned the authority of the caliphs, the most remote from the seat of their empire, appears to have been the very first in point of cultivation; her governors having for at least two centuries emulated one another, in affording every species of encouragement and protection to all those liberal arts and sciences, which first flourished at Bagdat under the sway of Haroun Alraschid, but, perhaps, still more under his enlightened son Al Mamoun.

“Beneath the wise and munificent patronage of those rulers, the cities of Spain, within three hundred years after the defeat of king Roderic, had been everywhere penetrated with a spirit of elegance and tastefulness and philosophy, which afforded the strongest of all possible contrasts to the contemporary condition of the other kingdoms of Europe. At Cordova, Grenada, Seville, and many more now less considerable towns, colleges and libraries had been founded and endowed in the most splendid manner, where the most exact and most elegant sciences were cultivated together with equal zeal*.”

“Their learning and arts they communicated liberally to all who desired such participation, and the Christian youth studied freely and honourably at

* LOCKHART'S Introduction to his Translation of Spanish Ballads.

the feet of Jewish physicians and Mahometan philosophers*.”

This liberality was admirable. It appears, that notwithstanding the hostility which in public life always divided the Moors and Christians, they frequently mingled together in private society on terms of amity. Their Moorish masters studied as much as possible to unite the two parties in civil rights and social amusements, and probably this policy would finally have succeeded in uniting the two nations, except for the baneful religious bigotry of the Christians. This caused friendship with infidels to be regarded as sinful, and resisted to the utmost. When chivalry sprung up, it served still more to unite the Moors and Christians, because the bond of knighthood was held to take place of all other relations, and the mutual toleration it produced, is said to have been very remarkable†. The institution is thought to have originated with the Christians, and spread from them to the Moors; nor does this appear to be the only influence which the manners of the Christians had upon that people, for in the engravings from Moorish pictures, in Murphy's *Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, women are occasionally represented unveiled.

In the Spanish orders of chivalry, the duties to women were particularly rigid. In an order of merit instituted by Alphonso the Eleventh, the knight

* Their literature consisted of encyclopedias, biography, history, some sciences, as botany, chemistry, medicine, rhetoric, poetry. See LOCKHART.

† MILLS' *Chivalry*.

bound himself never to institute an action at law against a lady; and to dismount, whenever he should meet a lady of the court, and offer her his services: if he refused or disregarded her commands, he was branded with the name of the discourteous knight.

He was enjoined to have a "Ladye love," whom he was to attend on foot, or on horseback; and if she were left a widow, his brother knights were bound to exert all their influence to obtain lands or money for her and her daughters, to maintain them in their station.

By the peculiar duties of this order, the knights were bound to be always ready to address the king, either for the good of the country, or of oppressed persons, and to shun flattery or dissimulation towards him. The rules for decorum and politeness were equally rigid.

The social consideration granted to women by the Spanish Arabians, is apparent in the encouragement they gave to their education*. This alone would have been a proof of some degree of practical freedom; for it is certain that neither individually nor collectively, do men ever encourage or even tolerate literature or science among those whom they desire to depress. Mankind always add contempt to tyranny; they have therefore an interest in keeping those despicable, whom they have reduced to passive obedience, in order that their injustice may be the less glaring.

* Historical Introduction to MURPHY'S *Arabian Antiquities of Spain*.

Valada, the daughter of one of the caliphs in Spain, was called the Arabian Sappho. Endowed both with beauty and genius, she applied herself entirely to poetry and rhetoric, and cultivated the friendship of the most eminent poets of her time, in whose conversation she took great delight. Aysha, a princess of Cordova, was pre-eminent for her learning and abilities. Her orations and poems were frequently read in the royal academy of Cordova with great applause. She died about the end of the tenth century, and left an extensive library and many monuments of her abilities. The compositions of a princess may be suspected to have been received, even by learned academicians, without much disposition to critical rigour; but these instances are adduced, not so much as proofs of female abilities as to exhibit the encouragement given to literary acquirements in the female sex. Many other women, inferior in station, but whose talents had rendered them celebrated in their day, are enumerated in the work just referred to, and they were regarded with general respect and admiration. Some remains of the poetical compositions of a lady who was called the Arabian Corinna, are said to possess merit of a very high order.

The ballads which have been translated, illustrate in many of their most important particulars, the view that has been given of the state of society in those times—that is to say, the turbulence, violence and insecurity, which gave birth to chivalry, the lofty and generous spirit of that institution, the freedom which Moorish women enjoyed, and he

tenderness and refinement of their love. Poetry and romance indeed seize chiefly upon the adventurous, the terrible, or the unusual. Poetry also chooses, for the most part, the traditionary, or at least the past, so that some caution is required in referring to ballads for a picture of manners. It is perhaps less in the adventure which forms the subject, than in the tone and sentiment of such compositions, that we should look for tests of existing manners. Translations are also fallacious guides; if free, a slight degree of embellishment clothes the sentiments with a degree of refinement or force which perhaps they had not; if very literal, they lose the effect they had in the original. The Spanish ballads relate most commonly to the early wars with the Moors, to domestic tragedies, such as the murder of children, or the crimes occasioned by jealousy, and to feats of arms and contests between rival sovereigns. But the spirit of chivalry is exhibited through them very strongly, and love is expressed with tenderness and delicacy. None of them appear individually very striking in the translation, but the following serenade is simple and pleasing*.

1.

While my lady sleepeth,
 The dark blue heaven is bright,
 Soft the moonbeam creepeth,
 Round her bower all night.
 Thou gentle, gentle breeze,
 While my lady slumbers,
 Waft lightly through the trees
 The echoes of my numbers,
 Her dreaming ear to please.

* Mr. Lockhart thinks they may be as old as the middle of the fourteenth century.

2.

Should ye, breathing numbers
That for her I weave,
Should ye break her slumbers,
All my soul would grieve.
Rise on the gentle breeze,
And gain her lattice height
O'er yon poplar trees,
But be your echoes light
As hum of distant bees.

3.

All the stars are glowing
In the gorgeous sky,
In the stream, scarce flowing,
Mimic lustres lie.
Blow gentle, gentle breeze,
But bring no cloud to hide
Their blest resplendencies,
Nor chase from Zara's eyes,
Dreams bright and pure as these*.

SECTION III.

Moral and Social Influence of Chivalry.

The much contested question of the moral and social influence of chivalry, cannot be disregarded in sketching out the history of women. For if its lofty and stern morals and its generous spirit had never any existence but in the pages of fiction, if its vices and oppressions were always as great as those of the surrounding masses which they affected to correct, then the apparent elevation of women can have been but a false glare. No caprice of the human mind, no combination of accidents could have raised the

* LOCKHART'S Translation of Spanish Ballads.

weaker sex to such honour, if they had been depraved and frivolous, as well as weak.

It seems quite preposterous to imagine a chivalrous feeling between gross, licentious, ungenerous men, and women without virtue or dignity. Even though some Ninon de l'Enclos be supposed to have practised her witchery over the callous breast of a mere sensualist, whether bred in the rude license of a crusader's camp, or the sickly exhalations of a modern court, no such sentiment would be generated within him as enthusiasm for the whole sex. We know that few things so deprave a man's opinion of all womankind, as an attachment to one whose consummate art has deprived her vice of its loathsomeness, by clothing it with the grace of refinement. Fortunately, society can suffer little from this evil, since it never can abound with such Circes. On the other side, the supposition of a general spirit of fervent adoration and respect, springing up between beings universally disgraced by open and unvarnished vices, requires but to be stated to be rejected at once.

Therefore either women never held that position which is given to them by the concurrent testimony of history, or there was virtue enough in society to give birth to that generous devotion. It was inevitable that a spirit too dignified to be universal, too enthusiastic to be durable, should lose its first brightness when the honour of knighthood came to be lavished upon thousands, and was no longer confined to the gift of men jealous of the dignity of their own order.

The profusion of creations in the field, without

that probation and those ceremonies which impressed the imagination, loaded the order with needy adventurers who had no merit but valour. The Crusades, with their horrors, came to confound the ideas of right and wrong in men's minds, by making the war against the infidels an atonement for guilt.

In a body so perverted, and too numerous for each individual to be distinguished, it was easy for men possessing such privileges as the knights, under pretence of going about to redress wrongs, to practise the greatest outrages. Originally, a knight was required to be master of a good deal of the knowledge of his day. He was a judge, and it was a principal part of his duty to be acquainted with law. This practice fell into disuse, and St. Palaye refers much of the decline of the order to this cause. Many other circumstances contributed to its decay, and final extinction; but its history has no relation to the present subject, further than as its moral influence is concerned. Chivalry lasted with more or less splendour till the beginning of the sixteenth century; at which time its influence appears to have been too subordinate to other causes, to deserve consideration. Its ages were stained by the atrocities of the Crusades, the horrors of the Inquisition, the desolating wars between France and England, and those of the Roses in the latter country: the Jacquerie in France, and the grinding tyranny of the feudal system everywhere. The times became prone to corruption; and latterly, while the habits and amusements, the language and forms of chivalry

remained, little of its spirit could be traced, except in the refinement and dignity it gave to moral sentiment. This (however seldom it appeared,) was never after entirely lost. Chivalry, at first, repressed the barbarism it could not eradicate; and even when its form and symmetry were destroyed, its elements were not annihilated. They were still in existence, scattered through society, forming innumerable small bases for future and more permanent civilization. But every change in the progress of wealth, which turned the minds of men from stern and heroic qualities to frivolous pursuits, diverted the vanity of the other sex, from the emulation of those qualities, to the acquisition of light accomplishments. They found the glittering but fragile altar, on which they had been raised up to adoration, shattered beneath them, and the language of respectful love was changed to that of satire. Hence there was considerable difference in the social spirit and character prevailing at several periods which are carelessly confounded under one denomination. In the diminution which distance gives to remote ages, periods which have really raised up new generations appear to us in undistinguished proximity.

At one time, the spirit of chivalry was chargeable with the solemn metaphysical fopperies of the courts of love; in which sentimental doubts and difficulties were propounded in pedantic forms, and gravely discussed with subtle and elaborate casuistry. At another, a set of enthusiasts, calling themselves the slaves of love, assumed that all sense of corporeal suffering was conquered by the predominance of

their passion ; they made it a point of honour, to brave the severest cold, with the slightest covering decorum would sanction, to load themselves with thick clothing in the heat of summer, and to practise many other similar extravagances. Chivalry at last sunk, under the more ruinous vices of a tyrannous aristocracy.

Its follies and crimes prove but the irregularity of rude minds, and the force of human passions. These can be permanently controlled, only by institutions and governments moulded by sound knowledge, not by the irregular shoots of mere feelings, however generous and admirable in themselves.

Whatever the corruptions successively engendered by the events of the times, the ideas and examples of chivalry in its best days, still preserved in the minds of men a high model ; a model endeared to their prejudices, by its associations with the glory of their country ; and suited to their temperament, because it grew from the habits of their own forefathers. "Chivalry (says James) stood forth the most glorious institution, that man himself ever devised. In its youth, and in its simplicity, it appeared grand and beautiful, both from its own intrinsic excellence, and from its contrast with the things around. In its after years, it acquired pomp and luxury ; and to pomp and luxury, naturally succeeded decay and death ; but still the legacy that it left behind it to posterity, was a treasury of noble feelings and generous principles.

"There cannot be a doubt, that chivalry, more than any other institution (except religion) aided to

work out the civilization of Europe. It first taught devotion and reverence to those weak fair beings, who, but in their beauty and gentleness, have no defence. It first raised love above the passions of the brute, and by dignifying woman, made woman worthy of love."

Unfortunately the principles of chivalry conveyed no knowledge how to correct, or even discern the bad constitution of society. The warlike enthusiasm and personal ambition, fostered by the order, tended to stimulate that intolerance of restraint and subordination, which rendered the inhabitants of one country more an assemblage of persons than a society. But the bright individual virtues, the noble ideas and generous sentiments, scattered by chivalry through the disorderly mass, were principles of civilization that ceased not to germinate, though often unseen.

Whoever compares the condition of society, before and after the ages of chivalry, will not fail to be struck with the progress civilization had made, and will acknowledge the traces of chivalry throughout, even to this day.

In estimating the characters of men, we should always make allowance for the prejudices in which they were nurtured. The knights, from their earliest infancy, were accustomed to consider war as the first and most important business of life. They were destitute of the corrective to erroneous opinions, now open to all, through the medium of books. We know how tenacious the opinion as to war has been even in our own memories. Their literature, even when they were most educated, was far too

confined to overturn so deep rooted a prejudice. The whole face of society presented them with the conviction, that the unwarlike were equally useless to themselves and to others; the idea of questioning the consistency of war with the holy spirit of Christianity did not enter their minds; hence their religion, instead of leading them to interpret its doctrines against what they held as man's great duty, superadded enthusiasm to its practice. But their vows mitigated the personal enmity of the combatants, and disowned the practice of unnecessary cruelty. We are frequently led, by an unphilosophical wonder at the caprices of passion, to doubt the sincerity of that virtue, which on some occasions prompted the utmost magnanimity, and yet, on others admitted of deeds, which the blood recoils from. But the inconsistency was not felt by those who acted from no general principle, at least, from no well reasoned principle; nor are the meltings of pity, or the glow of generosity on one occasion, any security that the fury of revenge, or the insensibility of selfishness will not prevail at another. Our own principles, in minds not used to generalizing, sometimes display equal inconsistency. Were we to take the hatred and severity, rigid sectarians exhibit towards their opponents, as a test of their general humanity, we should think them more like fiends than human beings. A stranger would scarcely understand the self-denying fervour with which, on all other occasions, he would observe them devoting themselves to acts of benevolence.

Therefore, neither are we entitled to deny the

reality of chivalrous virtue, because, even in its best days, its generosity and tenderness were not uniformly consistent.

On the other side, with respect to its effects on the condition of women, if chivalry preserved them from the slavery or degradation, to which the feudal spirit always tended to reduce the defenceless, we cannot therefore infer that their actual condition was as good as in civilized times like the present. When respect and deference were considered their unquestionable right, and their approbation and love one of the highest honours, their station and influence in domestic life must certainly have been raised. From the outrage and violence of the times, they were probably very much protected. The manners of chivalry must have banished from general society many of those galling inflictions, which flow from contempt; and which rough and insolent tempers are so apt to indulge in, when they can do so without personal danger. The scorn of female understandings, the sneer at their opinions, the petty jealousy of their interference, the servile acquiescence arrogant men sometimes extort from women, appear scarcely compatible with the respectful demeanour towards them, in which the knights were brought up from their earliest years. But, notwithstanding this stream of refinement with which chivalry had embellished the dark hues of society, we must not forget that the dark hues were the more prevalent. Whatever the generous principles of the order, we must not forget the selfishness and violence of the feudal spirit, and the irritability of tempers, to whom leisure was uneasiness.

Are men, who have sincerely adopted generous principles now, always consistent in applying them to practice? For example, are the families and dependants of Liberals, always more free than those of Tories? In describing the spirit of chivalry, it is too much forgotten, that the constancy of the knight to his ladye love was always before marriage. We have no reason to believe the violation of its sanctity afterwards, on the part of the husband, was *more* strongly condemned by the spirit of chivalry, than by the moral principle of the present day. It is strongly condemned at present, and yet it occurs. It is certain, that in those times manners were generally very licentious*; and, whatever the restraint his vows may have imposed on his passions while the enthusiasm of the order was in its first strength, the cus-

* The period of chivalry extended over many ages and many countries. Diversity of manners and morals might, therefore, be expected. Regarding it as a whole, it was one of the most horrible in history. Nevertheless, the morality and the chivalrous ideas, were co-existing with the ferocity and the licentiousness. These contradictions, says M. Guizot, are the peculiar character of the Middle Ages. In strictness, therefore, perhaps nothing ought to be represented as general. With regard to private morals, two opposite influences were acting upon men; the passion for adventure and war, and the influence of domestic life. The first stimulated bad passions, the last promoted virtue; chivalry attempted to unite the best qualities of both. The characters of men were different as each influence prevailed. Sometimes, perhaps, the same individual, at different times, obeyed different impulses, as is frequent with rude minds. But as a code of opinion, Guizot and Hallam are both agreed that chivalry assisted long and powerfully to civilize Europe. See page 127, where the views now recalled to the attention of the reader are given at greater length.

tom, which appears very early, for the knight, even when married, always to have some fair idol, not his wife, to serve with a sort of poetic worship, however guiltless it may often have been, was not favourable to morals.

Nor should we omit to remark, that the annals of chivalry relate only to the noble. It is not easy to discover what influence it had on the condition or manners of other classes. There is no doubt that the knight's vow included protection to the poor. It was long held dishonourable to injure peasants*. Instances occur in the Chronicles, in which the troops of both nations or parties passed through the same village, while the peasants scarcely interrupted their works. At the siege of La Reole, as related by Froissart, when the English were insisting on unconditional surrender, we find Sir Agos de Bans, who had conducted its defence, as earnest for terms for the meanest of his men as for the knights themselves. "If we should do so, sir," says he, (surrender unconditionally,) "I hold you of such honour and gallantry, that you will show us every mark of favour, as you should wish the King of France should do towards any of your knights; and, please God, you will never stain your honour for a few poor soldiers that are within here, who have gained their money with great pain and trouble, and whom I have brought here with me from Provence, Savoy, and Dauphiné; for know, that if the *lowest* of our men be not treated with mercy, as well as the highest, we will sell our lives in such manner as

* MILLS'S *Chivalry*. *Encyc. Brit.*—Supp.; art. Chivalry.

none besieged ever did." Neither are instances of this nature related with pomp, as bestowing peculiar lustre on the deed, but as the simple and natural conduct of those who moved in the ranks of the knightly.

On the other side, the spirit of the order was highly aristocratical. The Bourgeoisie were restricted from the use of gold, silver, or silk in their apparel; and in most countries, the duty of the knight towards ladies was expressly confined to those of noble birth. In the Spanish order of merit already mentioned, one of its rules was, that the knight was never to converse with mechanics or artisans! The Jacquerie, the most fearful and savage insurrection ever known, of the poor against the rich, and which was marked by a spirit of the most deadly malice, was occasioned entirely by the deplorable sufferings of the peasantry, who were totally neglected by their landlords and owners: at the same time that industry and accumulation were almost wholly impeded by the ravages of war.

That mercy to the peasantry which has just been alluded to, seems therefore to have implied little more, than the protection of those who came within the immediate reach of the knight's courtesy. It restrained useless slaughter, and even that was an important step compared with the sanguinary spirit of barbarian warfare; but it evidently created no feeling that it was a duty to improve the general condition of the dependent people, nor did it ever restrain the pillage of a country, when it was the interest of the invader to lay it waste.

Sir Walter Scott, who cannot be accused of

treating the institution with any undue degree of favour, concludes his review of the whole subject with observing that, though the duties of knight-hood could not have been always performed in perfection, they had a strong influence on public opinion, and that no doubt can be entertained of their having effected much good and prevented much evil; that we cannot but admit that it has left on the soil valuable tokens of its former existence, and that it has introduced urbanity, decency, and courtesy into the manners of Europe; but that its chief effects are to be sought for in the general feeling of respect to the female sex, in the sanctity of truth, and in the high sense of honour*.

I cannot better conclude these observations on the manners and influence of chivalry, than with the following very judicious observations from St. Palaye, in contrasting the powerful influence of the progress of letters on human society, with the unsteady and irregular effects of chivalry.

“We may be permitted,” says he, “to close this long series of historical details, by some reflections on the ignorance and barbarism into which the knights sunk, after they had abandoned the glorious function of administering justice. Without appearing too partial to letters, we shall endeavour to show that it is partly to them we are indebted for the improvement of manners. Let us not scruple to affirm that the rise of literature, by implanting in the hearts of men the first seeds of that mildness and humanity, which are so necessary for leading man-

* *Encyc. Brit.*—Supplement; conclusion of art. Chivalry.

kind to associate together in peace, was what gradually brought them to reflect and to reason ; for, in fact, is what we call taste anything else but the application of the rules of right reason, to the productions of genius and works of art ?

“ Had our ancient knights, who, in all the preambles of the Cartels for their tournaments, appear to have had no other object than to escape from their inactivity,—had they known the value of leisure employed in recreation after toil, and the cultivation of the mind, they would have seen themselves as they were. They would have discovered that it is neither more necessary nor more noble, to inure the body to military exercises, than to form the mind to the virtues and talents of society. But their taste was exercised on nothing but the compositions of their minstrels and troubadours, men of coarse and libertine habits, who, roaming continually about the world, most of them to earn their bread, had no time to draw the true principles of good taste and morals from the pure sources of antiquity. Under better instructors, and formed on models less defective, our knights would have learned that it is not a few random flashes of genius or force, that suffice to render a work worthy the applause of good judges, but the justness of the thoughts and the happy agreement of its parts with the whole.

“ In the next step, it would have been easy to have applied that universal immutable truth to morals. It would then have been seen that a scrupulous adherence to certain duties, and occasional acts of splendid virtue, carried to the very highest

pitch, but accompanied at the same time by scandalous or criminal excesses, produce but a monstrous assemblage, and that there is no solid virtue but in the uniform and habitual practice of all the duties required by religion, morality, and the profession we have chosen. Men would have thus come to the conviction, that nothing but a life of innocence, or at least free from crime, can give any claim to the reputation of virtue.

“We may well mourn over the fate of our ancient chivalry, the laws and principles of which cannot be too much admired. And we may say, that had it, in a more fortunate age, fallen upon such a people as the Athenians, (who possessed the means of improvement,) there is no doubt that its spirit would have formed men and citizens, very far superior to those imagined by Plato. But our ancestors knew nothing, and reasoned little; and unfortunately the rank and the exploits of those who made a boast of their ignorance, ennobled it in the eyes of the people. They loved glory, but did not know real glory. I cannot do better than conclude this comparison between their times and ours, in the words of a writer, whom every age and nation might be pleased to accept for an umpire. ‘In those rude ages the same importance was attached to bodily skill as in the days of Homer. Our age, more enlightened, gives the chief praise to mental accomplishments and to those virtues which raise a man above his condition, teach him to bridle his passions, and render him benevolent, generous, and sympathetic*.’”

* ST. PALAYE ; conclusion of 5th part.

SECTION IV.

Women in Modern Ages.

To pursue the history of women through the ages of misrule and violence that corrupted the spirit of chivalry, would be useless. It is sufficiently evident, that in proportion as the vices of barbarism renewed their dominion, the condition of women would be more or less affected by their evils. But, on the whole, society was improving: two great events were preparing to engage the attention of Europe—the struggles for religious freedom, and the revival of learning. These produced effects on the human mind, very different from those of any revolutions that had taken place during the ages of barbarism.

While the opinion reigned absolute, that war was the most important affair of life and the most honourable pursuit, the tendency of society was towards destruction. All the virtue consistent with so false a principle was, perhaps, brought forth by chivalry; but in the long run, the false principle overruled the force of the generous spirit, and chivalry sank like a meteor that owed its splendour to surrounding darkness. Its spirit gave an impulse to opinion and sentiment, but its errors and ignorance disabled it from supplying any corrective to the bad institutions and mistaken policy which fostered barbarism. It was not every mind that was capable of imbibing the generous sentiments of chivalry; but

ferocious passions could rarely fail to be stimulated by the idolatry of war, and the contempt for civil employments it produced. Among men, poor, restless, and to a great degree irresponsible, the craving for distinction excited by chivalry was a dangerous passion. No very general change over the face of society could be reasonably expected, from the attempt to engraft a spirit of gentleness and beneficence, upon a principle of war and destruction. The spirit was right, but the principle was wrong. It was just the reverse, in the next enthusiasm which seized the minds of mankind. In the struggles for religious freedom which followed, the principle was right, but it was pursued in the horrible spirit of persecution. Men, ready to die for the right of professing the truth, could not divest themselves of that persecuting spirit towards others, which was leading themselves to the stake. But there is a vigour in a right principle which gradually clears men's eyes of their prejudices. The dire and mistaken means by which successive reformers defended, each his own opinion, were abandoned, and men began to perceive that civil and religious liberty were of more use to society than martial feats, or extended conquests; and that it is still more important to learn how to reason, than how to fight.

The tendency of this principle was towards social improvement, and civilization began to make progress.

Before the extinction of chivalry, the airy throne on which women had been raised was broken down; but the effects of their elevation were never obliterated.

rated. There remained on the surface of society a tone of gallantry, which tended to preserve some recollection of the station they had once held. As civilization advanced, the idea that women might be disposed of like property, seemed to be nearly abandoned all over Europe; but their subsequent condition partook (as might be expected in the case of dependent beings) of the character prevailing in each country. The grave temper, and morbid jealousy of the Spaniards, reduced them almost to Eastern seclusion.

In France, where from the time of Catherine de Medicis the corruption of morals had been proverbial, it is well known that women ruled in every transaction of the empire. And assuredly, if an enemy were in search of an argument to discredit female influence, he could find nothing more suited to his purpose than the history of the French court and capital in those days, and long afterwards. But the argument would not be a fair one. It would be very hard to prove that the women in those days were worse, or as bad as the men; but we are naturally and justly more disgusted at their vices, because we expect them to be more pure and more gentle.

That the station and influence of women have no solid basis to rest upon, but their moral and mental dignity, is not inconsistent with the power they possessed in France. Their social station in that country did not spring from their vices, but when that station had been thoroughly incorporated into the habits of society, it must be allowed that

the corruption of morals which occurred could not drive them from it: rights and privileges long possessed cannot be easily withdrawn. But the effect of general corruption on the condition of women, is to destroy the *uses and benefits* of the rights they possess. It is therefore still true that the well-being of women depends upon good morals. It is in vain to expect the fruits of virtue together with the licence of vice. In a corrupt society, contempt and distrust among its members are mutual, and these must inevitably fall worse upon women than upon men. Men, by their professional abilities and direct power, have many ways of obtaining and even deserving social consideration, in spite of vices which tend to destroy it. Of such power women are destitute. Even in France they were very much in the power of the husbands, if they chose to exert it; and the vices of men's wives are too much opposed to domestic peace, for them not to have done so very often. It is too much overlooked that political influence and court favour can be the lot of only a few; and a life of agreeable gaiety can last but for a few years. Nothing therefore can atone to women for the want of domestic happiness. Notwithstanding their influence in society, it may be doubted whether the condition of women in France was generally as good as it seemed. Independently of all moral and religious considerations, and viewing the subject merely with respect to temporal prosperity, it may safely be said, that obliterating the virtues which knit together the bonds of domestic life, does more to destroy human hap-

piness than all the encroachments of governments on political freedom. This is at least certainly true as to women.

Indeed, if it were practicable to wipe out all sense of virtue from the human breast, possibly the resentment against vice might go too; the jealousy, the rage, the revenge, the suspicion, the contempt, that embitter the unions which are stained by mutual infidelities, might all disappear. It might then be tried fairly whether a life of pleasure, as it is called, is really a substitute for the affections and interests that spring from the sanctity of marriage. But the supposition is monstrous; such a state of mind is perfectly impossible in a civilized country; therefore it follows that wherever immorality becomes prevalent, the feelings are kept in a state of continual laceration. That this was really the case is very apparent in reading the memoirs of the times. The reader who is conversant with those works may be appealed to, whether a great part of the interest, and even the amusement they afford, does not proceed from the exposures of defeated and mortified rivals, the miseries of jealousy, the fury or despair of the deserted, the rancour and malice engendered by quarrels and ruptures between parties, whom nobody cares for enough to sympathize with their wrongs. To this may be added, that the intervals between the excitements of passion or vanity are not repose and cheerfulness, but ennui. Ignorance and the want of employment, combined with the continual stage life which the French led, must have conduced inevitably to rendering home, in its privacy, a place to be en-

dured, not enjoyed. In confirmation of this, it may be remarked that no people on earth ever complained so much of ennui as the French; and their incapacity of enduring home was so notorious, as to afford a common contrast between their manners and those of the English. Yet it ought to be quite otherwise, for by nature the French are more cheerful and more easily amused. If hearts and consciences, thoroughly seared and hardened by the great world, may sometimes have brought husbands and wives to that easy indifference which tolerates mutual infidelity, yet would human nature have to be recast before this could be the general feeling; therefore bitterness, aversion, and contempt, must have flowed in full streams under the brilliant surface of society.

French parents, as if in despair of the efficacy of moral training, and certain of the corruption of example, either confined their daughters in convents before marriage, or kept them in the strictest seclusion at home. At an early age they were taken out and given to a husband, whom perhaps they had never seen, or who might be an object of aversion to them from his age, his temper, or his appearance.

In old age they sunk into insignificance, except they had influence at court, or by wealth and power could make themselves important in the political factions which generally distracted the state. A great many of them turned devotees, either as the last resource for excitement, to which the loss of youth and beauty drives vacant minds, or impelled

by the fears and remorse which attend the close of a guilty and contemptible life.

In England, the comparatively moral character of the nation, and a certain disposition to austerity of manners, prevented equal corruption. Even in very early times the dependence of the women appears to have been alleviated by family kindness. In the Paston letters, the women of that family, in every relation, appear to have enjoyed the greatest consideration. The only exception which occurs was not from the authority of the men, but from a severe mother. In the disposal of the young women, their own wishes were always consulted, and are freely expressed. In reading that collection with a view to the condition of women, one is forcibly struck with the different places which they hold in this correspondence, and in that of Cicero. I had occasion formerly to remark, that in reading his letters it appeared to me scarcely possible for women to be less mentioned, considering the liberty and the power we know they possessed. In the Paston letters* it is quite the reverse. Both then and subsequently, the ideas of parental authority were carried indeed to a great extreme; but a young woman was not secluded, nor prevented from becoming in some degree acquainted with and loving, or at least respecting, the man she was to marry. It is true that her duty in this respect, as in all others, was understood to be absolute submission. The power of op-

* The above are a collection of letters from the Paston family, to each other and to their friends, written during the reigns of Edward IV., Richard III., and Henry VII.

pression existed, and the condition of women must have depended then, much more than now, on the temper and disposition of their parents and husbands. But opinion seems not to have sanctioned the exertion of parental authority over women, without reference to their own happiness. A woman passed indeed from the control of a rigid parent to a husband, whom she was to obey like a master, rather than as a more experienced and privileged partner. Nevertheless, the moral cast of the English character, which is so favourable to deep affections, seems to have preserved her in consideration and dignity. The characteristics of chivalry seem not to have been obliterated for a long time, and Elizabeth endeavoured to restore them. But as women have always been very much excluded by English manners from political influence, they are very seldom brought to notice in history. It is seldom that their condition has ever been thought deserving of notice or inquiry, and few things testify more strongly, how little they are regarded as citizens. In those, however, who are made known to us at this period, traces of moral and intellectual energy appear on many occasions. In their manners there appears to have been a staid and serious greatness, and their opinions and morals seem not to have been warped by the notion, that their sex might be an excuse for indulging in frivolity or art. This in itself is a presumption that practically the hand of authority had not been generally oppressive, for the servile can never be either ingenuous or dignified.

In the first ages after the rise of literature, the

very want of that multitude of second rate books we now possess, had the effect of compelling those who learned anything, to betake themselves to studies of a solid nature. There was consequently less difference then, between the education of the two sexes, than now. The reader will immediately recollect the instances of Lady Jane Grey, Mrs. Hutchinson, and others of the same class, and will feel that it is quite fair to assume, that many such existed, when a few came to be known. But we are not left to conjecture. Harrison, in his *Description of Britain*, says,—

“To say how many gentlemen and ladies there are, that besides sound knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongues, are thereto no less skilled in the Spanish, Italian, and French, resteth not in me; sith I am persuaded that as the noblemen and gentlemen do surmount in this behalf, so these come little or nothing at all behind them for their parts, which industry God continue. The stranger that entereth the court of England upon the sudden, shall rather imagine himself to come into some public school of the university, where many give ear to one that readeth unto them, than into a prince’s palace, if you confer thus with those of other nations.”

The sober way of life practised by the ladies of Elizabeth’s court, appears from the same author, who adds, “that reading, spinning, and needlework occupied the elder, and music the younger.”

Whether owing to some remaining influence from the spirit of chivalry or to that of literature,

which so frequently led to the most serious inquiries, or to both combined, the women of those days are certainly represented to us with a character of great dignity, and at the same time with the tone of reserve and gentleness, so suited to a being whose peculiar attributes are purity of mind and delicacy of frame.

But the times were about to change. The great and stirring contests in religion and politics, which had given such scope to the deep fervour of the British character, subsided as if the actors were breathless from their past exertions. The struggle for freedom sunk into acquiescence in the dominion of the most worthless of mankind, and zeal for religion fled before the spirit of banter and sneer. The enthusiasm of "fierce wars and faithful loves" of piety and of freedom, were succeeded by the reign of profligacy and levity.

During that disastrous period, the sordid and servile vices seem to have kept pace with the wildest licentiousness; and the dark and stern persecutions in Scotland form a fearful contrast with the bacchanalian revels of the court. The effects on the character and estimation of the female sex sustain all that has been said upon the connexion of their interests with the elevation of morals. It became the habit to satirize and despise them; and from this they have never entirely recovered. The demoralization which led to it, was, indeed, too much opposed to the temper of the English to be permanent; but women, for a long time after, ceased to keep pace with their age. Notwithstanding the

numerous exceptions, which must always have existed in a free and populous country like England where literature had made progress, it is certain that in the days of Pope and Addison the women, in general, were grossly ignorant.

The tone of gallantry and deference which had arisen from chivalry, still remained on the surface, but its language was that of cold unmeaning flattery; and from being the arbiters of honour, they became the mere ministers of amusement. They were again consigned to that frivolity, into which they relapse as easily as men do into ferocity. The respect they inspired, was felt individually or occasionally, but not for their sex*. Anything serious addressed to them, was introduced with an apology, or in the manner we now address children whom we desire to flatter. They were treated and considered as grown children. In the writings addressed to them, expressly for their instruction in morals or the conduct of life, though with the sincerest desire for their welfare, nothing is proposed to them, that can either exalt their sentiments, invigorate their judgment, or give them any desire to leave the world better than they found it. They inculcated little beyond the views and the duties of a decent servant. Views and duties, indeed, very commendable as far as they go, but lamentable when offered as the standard of morals and thought, for half the human species; that half too, on whom chiefly depends the first, the often unalterable bent given to the character of the whole. It were as wise to wash out the manure from the

* CHESTERFIELD; POPE; SWIFT; LYTTLETON, &c.

roots of the growing corn, as to impoverish the minds that are to form the rising generation. The writers took into consideration little but the interests of their own sex, and of those they took a most contracted view. It seems scarcely to have entered their thoughts, that woman could have any place in existence as a sentient and rational being, the creature of God, independent of her relation to the other sex; or that her rights to all the perfection and happiness her nature admits of, rest precisely on the same grounds as those of men:—the Creator's design, interpreted by the powers he has given. Those rights are limited only by the same principles, namely, the propriety of yielding the lesser to the greater social advantage.

“If we do not (says Gregory) wish to dispute the best attributes of the Creator, each individual is sent into the world with a view to his proper happiness; and no one human being was ever yet created solely for the use of another*.”

Influenced by the intuitive feelings of moral agents, female writers (of whom the last age produced several,) have generally held out purer and nobler views to their own sex; but writing in general, with minds either cramped by the common prejudice, or intimidated by the masses opposed to them, they dared not press the truths they saw. They laboriously flatter the other sex, they are continually throwing sops to Cerberus, in hopes that the triple heads of pride, prejudice, and power, will not observe that the inevitable consequence of education is to give rights.

* *Essays, Hist. and Moral*, by G. GREGORY; Essay 5th.

How vain is the jealousy of female education, and of the advancement of the relative condition of that sex! The priority of man in society, is quite indefeasible. It rests on his inherent superiority of strength, bodily and mental. The more perfectly the powers of both sexes are drawn forth, the more clearly will their relative rights be established; the better appointed will be the social functions of each; the more effectually will the benefits of civilization be spread; and the more certainly may the limits to the prerogatives of the inferior be placed, where, resting on natural laws, it will be felt that they are profitable to both. He who desires to place them anywhere else, is neither a philosopher nor a Christian.

The improvement in the present day is indisputable, but unhappily it bears a low proportion to the wants of society, or to that desire for happiness which is as lawful in woman as in man.

That the condition of women, taken generally, is such as no man would bear in his own case, will be scarcely disputed, whether it be thought feasible to relieve them or not*. But collectively that sex has acquired such extensive influence, that if it be not exercised rightly, the evils to society are beyond calculation.

Sensible to this truth, and taking more enlarged views of benevolence, the philosophers of the present day are generally the earnest advocates for improving the education, and increasing the rights of women.

Many women have taken a very honourable place

* See Note C. at the end of the volume.

in literature and science ; but if we were to take the acquirements of such women, as a criterion of the nature and objects of female education in general, we should be much mistaken. Their knowledge is a proof of the spirit of the age, in spite of their education.

It would be found on inquiry, that far the greater number of women, who have attained any distinction, have been self-taught; that their education tended more to repress and misdirect, than to assist them; or if otherwise, that it was their own persevering predilection for particular studies, which extorted instruction from a parent's indulgence, rather than the parent's authority or influence that inspired useful tastes.

The growth of this spirit is a great step in advance. But it is not enough. Self-instruction has a tendency rather to stimulate talent than to give judgment; but the object of education should be much more to give judgment and conduct, than to stimulate particular talents. Certainly, good education should embrace both objects. But the persons born with such abilities, as to produce anything of great importance to society, are comparatively few, and they generally possess an ardent temperament which makes them conquer impediments, and avail themselves of every advantage. Judgment and conduct, on the other side are necessary for all mankind, and are the best foundation for genius to work upon, as well as for common understanding.

In the education of women, there is great but misdirected effort, and the prejudice against giving

them enlarged and solid knowledge still holds tenaciously in general society.

It is the custom with men to discourage their learning, and yet despise them for ignorance. They treat the follies, which are the natural and inevitable consequences of an uneducated mind, alternately with acrimony and satire, but reward their attempts at learning with a sneer*.

It is impossible not to be struck with the increasing disposition to consider their rights as fellow-creatures, and as citizens. In those unfortunate cases, which bring domestic dissensions before the public, the pride of power is silenced. Often the tone of levity is forgotten, and a generous spirit of justice is brought to their assistance, to measure their provocations, make allowance for their temptations, or avenge with public indignation those abuses of power, which no law can reach.

Whether society be improving generally, is a question of no easy solution. Perplexed by the eddies which surround himself, each person forms a different judgment of the tendency of the general current.

Our characters and manners have gathered partial deposits from all the great tides of opinion and passion, that have varied the course of our eventful history. But one truth is incontestible:—whatever decision we come to, from comparing the virtues of one period with those of another, mental excitement is far more widely extended than ever was known before. The progress of wealth, the dissemination

* See Note D. at the end of the volume.

of knowledge, and the extraordinary reverses which have agitated the political world, have shaken the body of mankind out of that resemblance to flocks and herds, which has hitherto been the description of the bulk of the people. And in a period of such general and unaccustomed excitement, when the seeds both of good and evil have more than ordinary vitality, it is a source of deep concern to perceive, that ignorance on subjects of universal and serious importance, should by all be considered the privilege, and by many the duty, of one half of the community.

It is under an earnest conviction of the evils of that prejudice, and of the great social advantages of raising the education and the position of the female sex, that the attention of the reader is besought to the following inquiry.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE GROUNDS AND LIMITS OF FEMALE SUBORDINATION.

SECTION I.

That Christianity has been favourable to Women.

CHRISTIANITY has done more to raise and uphold the condition of women than any other cause.

We have no reason to suppose the station they held under the simple manners of the ancient Germans, could have been maintained through the long ages of barbarism and corruption that succeeded. Slight as the preceding sketch has been, it suffices to show how strong is the tendency in mankind to oppress the weak; and in how many respects, the ferocity of the Middle Ages was reducing women to the condition of mere property. Had our rude ancestors met with a religion less pointedly favourable to women, it is probable they would have been finally little less degraded than they still are in the East. In some of its most corrupted forms, indeed, one is tempted to question whether Christianity were much better than the superstitions it exploded. But through all its perversions, a spirit had been spread by it, directly favourable to the female sex.

It could never more be concealed from those who embraced it, that before God all mankind were equal. The restraint the religion imposed on the

passions,—the humility, the benevolence it inculcated, all conspired to promote consideration for women. Under its influence, every spark of natural tenderness which had withstood the hardening tendency of war and violence, must have come forth and ripened. That great and absolute change which the Gospel calls for under the emphatic expressions of a “new life,” and becoming “a new creature,” tended to shake the hold of established customs, in every part of the world. And whenever the inconsistency of existing manners with the new religion was discerned, changes were facilitated by that very love of singularity, whereby young converts so frequently seek to display the vigour of their principles; perhaps to evince it to themselves.

But men do not discern, at once, all the applications of a new principle. They are partially blinded by custom. Some things they amend, and others, quite as objectionable, they leave as they were, or defend with passion. Only for this, the depression of women would have been as effectually abolished among Christians, as polygamy was. Being less able to defend or avenge themselves than the other sex, women might suffer some wrong from the selfish or violent tempers of men. But in institutions or customs, that affected to be established on principle, no favour would have been deliberately shown to the stronger. Whatever disabilities were suffered by women, would have been such only as resulted naturally and properly, from their need of protection from the other sex, and their inability to serve society equally. They would have been such only,

as in analogous circumstances men also would be required to bear. For even men who depend for protection on others, must sacrifice some share of their independence. But there would not have been one measure of justice for men, and another for women. Regard would have been had to the circumstances of the case, not to the sex of the parties. It is no argument against the service Christianity rendered to women, that it did not at once counteract all human prejudice on the subject, and obliterate every trace of their degradation. It maintained a principle always alive in their favour, whether rightly applied or not. And if passion and prejudice have so far resisted the all comprehensive benevolence and justice of the Gospel, they would assuredly have been still more tenacious against the slow progress of human reason*. If we consider the instances daily before our eyes, in which the utmost contradiction exists between conduct and principle, we may well doubt whether, without the influence of the new religion, women would ever have been permanently freed from their established depression.

It may be possible to imagine a succession of circumstances which would never have led to that result. But it is a very difficult task, for reason alone to overturn a practice like this, after it has

* St. Peter assigns the weakness of woman as a reason for her husband to treat her with honour. Not (it will be allowed) because weakness, merely as such, could be supposed to bestow an obvious claim to respect; but that as a duty, peculiarly Christian, men should disclaim the law of force, and consider the inability of women to resist or avenge insult, as involving a claim upon them to maintain that sex in honour.

sprung up and become interwoven with the whole mechanism of society.

Therefore it was happy that a voice was sent, which proclaimed aloud, that in the eyes of God all mankind were equal,—the high and the low, the male and the female, the wise and the simple.

From the earliest times, wherever that religion was received, responsibility to a higher tribunal than that of man gave women self-respect. It began to make them use their own reason, and exert their own principles to rectify manners, that hitherto had been ruled by unreflecting custom. Without that spirit of scrutiny, which men, accustomed more or less to judging for themselves, must have brought in some degree to every subject proposed for their assent, women generally rushed in numbers to receive “the glad tidings.” They were indeed “those who sat in darkness.” Their influence soon increased the number of converts from the other sex; for it is not essential to being led, that men should have great respect for their leaders. There are always many over whom repetition has the force of authority; and with whom the enthusiasm of the teacher supplies the place of argument. Whatever the grounds on which Christianity was embraced, women must immediately have been held in a new light. They who were honoured by God, man could no longer consider as merely his property. Their duty to himself shrunk into a transitory arrangement for a short life; while their independent rights rose in importance and sanctity, as the ideas of immortality unfolded themselves in his imagination.

That almost passive obedience "towards the powers that be," which the early teachers of Christianity instilled into all their disciples, also tended to prevent the alarm to the pride of the other sex, which the rising independence of women might have given. The spirit of meekness was instilled, while equality was proclaimed; and the strict purity and decorum which the Gospel enjoined, must have tended to allay suspicion and jealousy.

The utmost care was taken to provide for the security of the infant religion, by not setting it at variance with existing institutions, unless directly criminal; rather leading men to reform themselves, than extorting an unwilling surrender of customs they revered. Thus the effects of the new religion were influenced then, as they have been ever since, by surrounding circumstances.

SECTION II.

The necessity and benefit of Justice to all Parties.

In the history of past times, the violations of true Christian principle, which so often call forth our amazement, are not to be all accounted for solely by the respect paid to old institutions held sacred. The religion had to contend, not only with institutions grown venerable by time, and which were followed on principle, but also with corrupt passions and wide-spread vices; it received some perversion from both.

Though religion be a sentiment so powerful and pervading as to enter into all our institutions, and

influence our national character, we must yet keep in mind, that its divine origin does not altogether prevent it from contracting an unhealthy taint from the minds it passes through. This is felt by everybody. Religion is not answerable for the vices with which it is found in conjunction. Religion is not the source of the defects it has failed to subdue; even though it give them some peculiar direction in which, (as in the instance of persecution,) their deformity is more offensive, from that very connexion with itself or its name. Like the primary elements of the material world, its different combinations form new and dissimilar products, in which every vestige of its original character is effaced.

There are two leading characters, one or other of which will be found to predominate in every form of religion, whether founded in error or truth. The one places the service of the creature to his God in the practice of virtue, the other in ceremonials accurately, sometimes elaborately, defined. Though these, for the most part, consist merely of superstitious trifling, yet such is not always the case. Ceremonial observances we know have been appointed, in some instances, for important purposes: but they can suit only the people and the circumstances for which they were appointed, and moreover are calculated to keep mankind stationary,—a condition incompatible with the vitality of the Christian spirit. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of

God in Christ.” In religions of the last description the connexion with morality is slight and indirect; nor can it well be otherwise, because the very intent of the ceremonials is to render personal honour and attention to the Deity, and even to affect to confer on him positive services. Thus in the Pagan theology it was believed that incense was nutritious, or at least grateful to the gods. Splendid temples and offerings did them honour, and the falling off of their train of adorers filled them with mortification and jealousy. Even when the ideas of mankind are raised somewhat above polytheism, the intention of rites and ceremonies is to perform somewhat that adds to the personal honour and dignity of the Creator, and is gratifying to him for his own sake. To the unenlightened and unreflecting, that is, to the great mass of mankind, such performances appear therefore, in point of justice, to have a stronger claim on his benevolence, than the services we render to each other. Hence the attention of the worshipper is withdrawn from precepts that would civilize the whole world; and the inherent craving of the human heart for religious hopes, is appeased with processions and images, austerities, psalm-singing, solemn grimaces and pious rhapsodies, “cowls, hoods, and habits,”—“reliques, beads, indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls.”

Opposed to this, is that principle which places the essence of religion in the practice of moral virtues, for the purpose of obeying a God, too great and perfect to be benefited himself by the poor dependent beings whom he has made; who wills

their obedience for their sakes, not his own; and who has appointed that all their duties should tend to perfect the nature he has given them, and lead to the future happiness for which they are designed.

The tendency of this creed is to direct the aim and purposes of mankind, to whatever can exalt human nature and improve human happiness. It represents us as gardeners in a vineyard, or servants intrusted with a variety of means, who are not "to keep their talent in a napkin," but to exert their skill and ingenuity to employ it to the best advantage. The moral principles themselves are fixed and unchangeable; but their application to the circumstances by which we are surrounded, must depend very much on the degree in which reason has been exercised. By no imaginable instruction could the mind be so tutored, as to see through all the errors and prejudices of its times at once; but the principles possess in themselves a power of progression. The generosity of one time will be but justice in another; the temperance, that brings respect and distinction in one age, will be but decorum in one more civilized; yet the principles are at all times the same.

When reason has not been much exercised, men continue blind and awkward in the application of truths, which in the abstract they admit. Custom has made the lawfulness or propriety of some practice, as convincing on the one side, as the arguments against it are on the other. The force of custom is so great, that any practice, which has lasted long and

spread widely, affects the minds of most people like a law of nature. It never occurs to them to try it by the test of a newly-acquired precept. When the ideas of men have run long in one channel, the clearest demonstration of the error involved in them, produces rather amazement than conviction. They regard the conclusion to which they have been driven, more as a curious example of the paradoxical inferences theoretical persons draw out of admitted truths, than as a reason for changing their practice.

Prejudices are sometimes so tenacious, that even the sufferers from them do not always hail the first attempts to upset them. Men accustomed to consider themselves as contemptible, instead of feeling the delight we expect, when a loftier spirit of justice places the life of the poor on the same level as that of the rich, have sometimes been found rather disposed to moderate decisions, which to them had an air of extravagance.

I have been told that the courtesy and civility, with which we receive the services of our inferiors, excite the laughter of the degraded peasantry of Egypt and Syria when practised towards them. New truths require to ferment some time in the public mind, before they can be reduced to practice.

Our own countries are so accustomed to the law of primogeniture, that it has sanctioned the utmost degree of partiality in the parent towards his children. The same person who is shocked, if a father make a grossly unequal division of property between the second and third sons, is shocked when he does not do so between the first and the others. Nor

are instances wanting in which, when the parent had left all equal, the younger members of the family joined together to contribute, each a portion of their share, to make their elder brother somewhat richer than themselves. It appeared to them easier to reduce themselves to narrower straits, than to profit by what seemed to them a hardship. That there may be political reasons which justify the institution, is neither affirmed nor denied in this place, as not affecting the question, for it is certain that it is not its political uses which influence the general feeling. Few people consider that part of the subject at all; but it seems to them natural that the elder brother of a family should be made rich, though all the rest are left poor to make him so.

In like manner may our habits, in various instances, continue opposed to the spirit of a religion, which in other directions is producing great and salutary changes. Thus it is, that though Christianity has done much for the condition of women, they are still exposed to many hardships equally unjust and unnecessary.

Formerly it was worse. Imagination immediately turns to their condition in Spain, the fertile source of tales and romances founded on the extravagant authority of husbands and parents. In catholic countries, the convents were filled, not solely with the victims of their own enthusiasm, but with young women lured or forced in by the avarice or pride of their parents, either to save the expense of their establishment, and provide better for an elder son, or to avoid the mortification of an inferior connexion.

If married, it was usually without being consulted; and in olden times, when they had the misfortune of being heiresses, wealth, which gives power and prosperity to the other sex, only caused them to be given away by the king to any one who had served him in war, or could pay him handsomely for the prize. Geoffry de Mandeville paid to Henry the Third ten thousand marks, for leave to marry Isabel countess of Gloucester, and possess her lands. "If (says Hume,) the heir were a female, the king had full power, either to give her to whom he pleased, or seize her land if she refused." He adduces numerous instances of purchase money given to the kings for their letters to females, ordering them to marry; or to their guardians, requesting them to give their ward to the person deputed by him to receive her.

The relation between the efficacy of religion, and the progress of knowledge, is indeed intimate. While knowledge and education remained stationary, so did the interpretation of the precepts of justice and humanity. It requires the united influence of both, to give full practical effect to the obvious and admitted truth, that the powerful should never impose a needless privation or suffering on the weak.

We are, therefore, fairly entitled to question every institution and every custom, which tends to deprive one part of the community of any advantages they might enjoy without detriment to the rest. It is not always easy to balance the enjoyment bestowed upon one party, against the sufferings inflicted on another. But if we do not overload one side of the scales with our private self interest, judgment will

not be often perplexed to find what is equitable. If it be sometimes difficult to weigh human interests accurately, that is no reason for using false weights on purpose. On many occasions, it may be a valid reason for not disturbing the course of society to which men's minds have conformed, that we do not know well how to compare the interests at stake. But it happens much oftener, that the rule of justice is difficult to find, only because of the strength of our own prejudices.

The good of society, the good of the whole, has really no meaning but the good of the greater number; and it is implied, that the sacrifices required from the few to the many should be reduced to the least, and compensated if possible. They who receive no compensation for the loss of their rights are mere victims. This is a misfortune which cannot always be avoided. But it should be a sacred rule to reduce the number of such sufferers to the least.

The discussions on the right of impressing seamen, which have taken place at various times, showed how clearly these principles are received by the common sense of mankind. Those who attacked, and those who defended that practice both agreed, that if our navy in time of war, could not be manned otherwise for the defence of the country, the right of the seaman to offer his labour when, and where, and on what terms he pleased, must be violated; that he must be forced to serve his country, and take in payment whatever it thought fit to offer. They who opposed the practice, denied not the right of coercion, in the case assumed; but they

denied that the necessity existed, which alone would give birth to the right. They contended, that by high pay and other measures, it might be made the interest of men to offer their services, and therefore, that the injustice of the practice was established. The defenders of the system did not pretend that the right could be justified, on any grounds but necessity. But they made out the necessity, by denying that such high pay as the seaman would demand, could be given, without imposing burdens oppressive to the whole community. Thus was it admitted on all sides, that the rights of the few, however strong, must yield to the interests of the many; but that nothing could defeat the claim of the injured to compensation, except the impossibility of granting it, without greater injury to others, either in extent or degree.

It is certain that in the long run, there is no real advantage in injustice, even to the aggressors.

Indeed, while we confine the ideas of advantage and happiness to the mere acquisition of money or power, we may admit of an individual or a gang, that they have gained a great deal by spoliation. But what thinking person would apply such an argument to the real interests of all mankind, and hold out, that it was always an advantage to one part of the community to rob the other?

If single acts of injustice, such for instance as conquests, have been occasionally deemed beneficial to the conqueror, it has been only when he made atonement for his violence, by giving to the conquered more social justice, than they possessed before. A

system of government by injustice has always reacted injuriously on the prosperity of the oppressors. We need not look far for examples.

In the whole theory of morals, no maxim is better proved than that justice, upon the whole, is the virtue that pays best. Generosity and charity excite, as they ought, great admiration, great emotion. But we cannot live in a state of high excitement; strong emotions in their nature are transient.

Though justice has been called a "hobbling old dame, who cannot keep pace with generosity," yet it is the hobbling old dame who creates confidence, and confidence is the firmest root of love, respect, and gratitude. Generosity may come with holiday gifts, but justice fills our cup with every day comfort. We cannot live upon gifts; if we do, we are degraded. Justice offers nothing but what may be accepted with honour; and lays claim to nothing in return, but what we ought not even to wish to withhold. There is, indeed, no generosity so real as that of conceding rights.

If there be such a thing as right or property acknowledged at all, there can be none so indisputable as what is made our own by the laws of nature; the right to use our own senses and faculties, our judgment, conscience, and industry, for our own happiness and moral improvement. The restraints of law and subordination are not intended to abridge, but to give greater scope to the natural freedom of all. Mutual violences would impede many more free actions than the restraints of just government. Removing those restraints, would not leave the total of

any man's actions more free; except the encroachments of every one else upon him, at the same time could be represssd. It may sound paradoxical, but it is nevertheless true, that the liberty of the very aggressor who is punished, has been greater for the existence of law, though it imprisons him at last. It preserved his life and his property safe, and enabled him to live, and to do and speak as he pleased, up to the moment when he invaded the rights of his neighbours. He could not have had equal enjoyment of his own, had they all been as licentious as he. Too much legal liberty impairs practical liberty*.

Such are the principles that sanctify authority, and justify any privation they really require. But just in as much as they are disregarded, power approaches to the nature of tyranny. The laws, customs, and prejudices, which aim only at securing to the superior a more easy and indolent enjoyment of his rights, without due regard to the interests of others, are really adverse to the well-being of all. People are not better served, but much worse, by having slaves instead of paid servants. One nation does not prosper more, but a great deal less, by injustice to its dependencies. None but children imagine a despot is greater or happier than a constitutional monarch. And the male part of societies in which women are absolute property, is degraded and stationary, compared with that in countries where female rights are partly restored. If to those rights, the principles of justice were still more impartially applied, society would be still better and happier.

* See Note E. at the end of the volume.

In order, however, to obviate the displeasure the present purpose may excite in some minds, the male reader may be assured, the inquiry will not lead to placing the two sexes on a perfect equality.

Equality of rights between all parts of society, is very far from being a dictate of justice. Society, without any system of subordination, would pass into anarchy; and command is given to some for the real benefit of all. Diversity of ability, of function, of wants and desires, is fixed in human society by its nature; and justice is most perfect, when it distributes the rights of parties most in accordance with those natural circumstances*. Though one party be made the superior, therefore, it would be a mistake to suppose the others have gained nothing. Their condition is essentially bettered by the sacrifice of that share of authority, which is taken from them to be lodged in better hands. Who can doubt that the power and privileges bestowed on the general, or on public authorities, are for the interest of the soldier and citizen, quite as much as for that of the more elevated commander? Mankind are sometimes so little civilized, that even the rule of a despot is better than none. Gradations of rank are defended on no other grounds, than that the whole community, the inferior and unprivileged as well as the others, are supposed to benefit more by the order those distinctions maintain, than injured by the sacrifices they entail.

On this mutual advantage rests the whole duty of submission to authority. Except they are blinded by the selfishness of power, few people will be found

* See Note F. at the end of the volume.

to advance such a paradox, as that submission or allegiance can be morally due to those from whom no benefits moral or physical are received in return. Such authority rests only on force. Resistance might be imprudent, but could not be unjust.

When resistance is criminal, it is on the grounds, that as the best human institutions are only approximations to justice, but cannot be perfect, the strife and confusion, perhaps the bloodshed, attendant on the struggle, often produce more mischief than the wrongs it pretends to redress. The general feeling is, therefore, that the sufferings of mankind should be great, to justify endangering the peace of society. Whether from an extension of this principle, or the mere force of habit, it is certain, that opinion runs strongly in favour of submission to established authority. Even when exercised oppressively, time-sanctioned power is regarded with reverence.

This, which is true in most cases, applies peculiarly to the authority of men over women. Their condition is affected much more by opinion, than by the laws of the country. How little in fact could privileges in a statute book, avail to one from whom general opinion withheld their exercise; and who was, at the same time, given over a legal prisoner into the hands of the very parties, whose power the privileges were meant to restrain?

What more is the complicated system of trusts and settlements, which so frequently involve property with inextricable difficulties, but the efforts of law to secure to the defenceless, the real possession of that which is their own?

Opinion is, indeed, the strongest of all laws, and can defeat the operation of every other. Through its influence, rights that are oppressive cease to be exercised; and where it is corrupted, legislation can do little. Laws made against the opinion of the whole community, could be enforced only by the point of the bayonet. And rights and privileges, conceded to those from whom general opinion withheld them, unless they could be asserted by force, would fall into disuse. No law can maintain continual battle; and what is neglected or obstructed at every moment, soon ceases to be attempted. Opinion, therefore, must be reformed before any effectual changes can be made by authority, in established customs. But when this takes the lead, recusants may be compelled to submit by legal enactments, made in conformity with the general spirit. In such cases, the authority of law, no doubt, accelerates the progress of opinion, by giving it clearness and unanimity. In the mean time its own influence is powerful. Opinion acts first by its force over our own minds; and next, by our fear of others. None but the most hardened of men, will act habitually in opposition to their own opinion of what is just; and few will brave general censure, by availing themselves even of legal authority to do what common opinion has stigmatized.

If all the power, which the indefiniteness of the law leaves to the one sex over the other, were exercised, a woman might be deprived of almost every enjoyment of life, except food, shelter, and clothing. Why are such violences never attempted, even when

discord has loosened the bands which first drew the parties together? Because opinion is too firmly established against such abuse of power. There is a point, much within the vague bounds of the law, beyond which no man can carry his resentment or indulge his selfishness, without finding the odium it creates react upon himself. Unhappily the limits are still wide, within which an arbitrary spirit may work unseen oppression.

Legislation might assuredly give greater protection than it does. But the more the subject is examined, the more we shall be convinced, that it is only by raising the standard of opinion, the condition of women can be substantially improved.

It would be a most desirable object to render the condition of women, as dependent upon their own conduct, as that of the other sex is upon theirs; and to prevent the decent and industrious in one class, the prudent and virtuous in another, from having the influence of their virtues lost both to themselves and to society, through the control of the idle and profligate. But in the present state of opinion, it is to be feared, that any attempt to place the legal rights of the parties on a footing of greater equality, with a view to that object, would be defeated by the force of prejudice; nor indeed is it certain, that, educated as women now are, any sudden change, either in the upper or lower classes, would be desirable.

SECTION III.

Grounds on which the Authority of Men has been rested.

Earnestly desiring, therefore, to do somewhat more than utter vague declamations on the inequality with which the female part of the community is treated, I shall not be deterred, by the wideness of the subject, from inquiring how far that inequality is authorized by true justice.

On the one side, a good deal of nonsense has been written and spoken concerning the rights of women. On the other, it will not be denied, that the defenceless seldom obtain fair treatment, and that generally the condition of women has been very hard. As injustice is never really beneficial, even to those who practice it, every candid mind will be willing at least to meet the inquiry, whether there be any general and consistent principles, which will distinguish the just rights of women from what are visionary.

The feeling, that it would be impossible the rights of the several parties in domestic life should be legally defined, renders it only the more desirable, that everybody should have just principles upon the subject. The more there is that must of necessity be determined by the private judgment of each person, the more important it is, that his judgment should be guided by definite principles. This is acknowledged in public life. A governor going out to a distant, or disturbed colony, must necessarily be trusted with a certain degree of indefinite power. One might as

well endeavour to specify the waves of the sea, as the cases that will present themselves for his decision. But for that reason, the principles on which he is expected to govern, should be explained to him with the greater precision. There, nothing should be left vague, as the clearness of the principle gives considerable security, notwithstanding some errors and doubts in its application.

The authority of men has been rested on notions, some so confused, others so false and mischievous, that it is no wonder it has filled society with secret misery, and crippled the energies of half the human race. It leads men to indulge their tempers at the expense of female happiness, who would shrink from doing so, if they saw their conduct in the light of injustice; or discerned that their claim to submission, rested on no better basis than force.

The grounds, on which the authority of men over women has been chiefly defended, are the following.

First, that he is the superior being.

Second, that women, being too weak to resent wrong, have a claim to gentle usage on the grounds of humanity, but cannot have any rights, properly speaking: the rules of justice, therefore, do not apply to them.

Thirdly, that the custom of reducing the female sex to subjection is universal, whence it may be thought to have the sanction of a law of nature.

With respect to the first, it may be replied, that in no civilized code in the world, would any such maxim be admitted, as that the superior, whether by nature or social condition, had an inherent right to

seize on the liberties of the inferior. It may have been acted on many times, like every other barbarism that has retarded the improvement of the species; but the days are past, when it was attempted to defend such a robber-like doctrine. Whatever dominion it may secretly hold, it is never maintained openly in its barefaced deformity even by slave-holders or despots, who have every interest (as they imagine) at stake, to corrupt their honesty, and every prejudice rooted, to mislead their judgment. They cloak their practice with the plea of necessity, or general utility. The slave-holder says, he must perish, if he do not compel the negro to work. He no longer assumes, that the simple fact of his superiority makes the negro his natural property. But he asserts, that the necessity of his condition is such, as to require the negro's service for everything that renders life worth preserving; and that the brutality of the latter, renders it impossible to obtain his services on any other terms, than those which, in their mildest form, he admits would be flagrant injustice to a white. The despot assumes, that the mass of mankind are so besotted, that it is much for their interest to be held under absolute dominion; that they are incapable of governing themselves in any respect, and are more than repaid for the loss of their nominal freedom, by the protection and order his authority maintains.

Thus it appears, that however criminal the practices of the slave-owner or despot may be, neither dares openly to justify them by any such assumption as that of a right founded on his own superiority.

Thus also they bear involuntary testimony to the reprobation with which such a principle is visited by the rest of mankind. To find it openly maintained that the interests of one human being may be sacrificed, without necessity and without compensation, to those of another, we must abandon the region of civilization, and go among savages*.

It follows, that nothing but necessity will justify the sacrifice of one human being to another; and the proper test of the necessity is, the greater amount of inconvenience that would ensue to all society, from abandoning its claim on the sacrifices of a part. Whenever society exacts such sacrifices, they should always be compensated as fully as possible. For every one whose interests are sacrificed to the good of others, without any compensation, is not a citizen, but a victim. It has been already observed, that a victim is sometimes unavoidably necessary; but if the victims should amount to thousands, or hundreds of thousands, we may doubt the necessity, and look with great suspicion on the wisdom of institutions, which entail such extensive evils.

All this, it may possibly be said, is true even to triteness as applied to men, but it does not apply to women: therefore, before the argument is pursued, an earnest protest must be entered, against the assumption that the principles of justice are less applicable to women than to men. That notion, in the vague and unreasoning form above given, is the popular expression of the doctrine contained in the second proposition†; where its extravagance is so

* See Note G. at the end of the volume. † P. 197.

apparent, that it would be undeserving attention, except for the show of philosophical argument by which it has been established. In the minds of the uninquiring, the doctrine has no other basis, than that somehow or other it would be very strange to put men and women on a level. In the hands of Mr. Hume, it is made the strict inference from a supposed fact in the constitution of the human mind. An examination of the argument will be found in the supplemental notes for those who desire it*. Not to weary other readers with so dry an inquiry, it will be sufficient in this place to observe that when doctrines like that, fatal to the well being of society, affect to be drawn from philosophy, we may suspect there is some fallacy in the reasoning. It is more likely an able man should have reasoned wrong, though we may not be acute enough to unravel his sophistry, than that virtues, which the experience of all ages has proved to be essential to society, should have no solid basis.

The very meaning of justice is, a law that supersedes force; but the proposition in question, virtually asserts that where there is no force, there no justice can be due. The writer admits there is such a virtue as justice, and that society could not exist without it. His object is to trace out how we come by it, or to what principle in the constitution of our nature, its origin is to be referred. In the process, he refers it to a principle which *obliges* him to infer that the weak can have no rights. He should rather have suspected that his principle was erro-

* See Note H. at the end of the volume.

neous, when it led to a consequence so destructive to society!

The use of the investigation is, that the discovery of a true principle leads to a wider and more correct rule of conduct, than we can arrive at by experience alone, blinded as the latter often is by prejudice and inaccurate observation. But Hume's principle, instead of extending and methodizing our ideas of justice, subverts the very notion of it. This is an argument against his theory.

Justice is but the rule for dispensing the most extensive and least partial beneficence*. The perception that others have a right to enjoyment as well as ourselves, arises from the very constitution of our nature, for it is as certain that we are made to feel for others, as that we are made selfish. That the latter quality tends to predominate is true, but that does not disprove the reality of sympathy. The rudest savage, the child at the earliest dawn of intelligence, catches the infection of what others feel. If they laugh, he is gay; if they weep, he is agitated; if they scream, he is terrified. Long before he is capable of forming his ideas into abstract propositions, he discerns that others have a right to life and enjoyment as well as himself. The more the ideas of men are unfolded, the more clear will it appear, that every creature has an *equal* right from the hand

* That is what is meant by the utility of justice. The difference between the views in the text and those of Hume, is, that by him the expression "utility," applied to justice, means its utility to the strong,—in the text, it means utility to all mankind. See Note I. at the end of the volume.

of nature to its own proper happiness. The superior being has no sanction for his own rights but nature; the inferior has the same for his. In human societies, the rights of both are alike morally subject to the law of reason. It is not because man is rational that he has a right to happiness, but because he is sentient; and the meanest animal has precisely the same right to the enjoyments which nature made it capable of, as man himself. The greater endowments, therefore, of the male part of the human species, give them no stronger right to pursue their own happiness, than the female part possess to pursue theirs. To pretend that one of the principal endowments of the former is strength (bodily and mental) to master the other, and that he has therefore the sanction of nature to use it, is a mere re-assertion of the law of force, which it is the purpose of justice and reason to supersede. But suppose it admitted, what would be the consequence? Fraud is the natural remedy against force. The same idea of nature, that is supposed to sanction the use of strength without regard to justice, must equally sanction the use of ingenuity without regard to truth. How could the bonds of society be more entirely loosened? But as rational creatures, both sexes are subject to the moral control of reason, which establishes the authority both of justice and truth. As explained in a former place, reason is not opposed to nature, but on the contrary, is the most distinguishing attribute of human nature. Its effect is to substitute mutual rights, which promote the growth and well being of society,

for force and fraud, which tend to mutual destruction*.

Since the essence of justice is to overrule the predominance of mere strength, weakness is so far from defeating the claim to social rights, that where such rights are denied to the weak, it is justice itself which is destroyed. It is, therefore, a violation of justice to deprive women of any means of enjoyment which nature has given, except on the same ground that would justify depriving men of their enjoyments; namely, the necessity of compelling the surrender of some lesser, for some greater social advantage. Sacrifices of this nature constitute the very essence of social institutions. To yield up the trifling for the important, or the interests of the few for those of the many, is just; and they who suffer, may lament their misfortune, but cannot complain of being wronged. Inequality is the condition of existence. It is carried through all nature, where, as far as we can see, (and we can reason no farther,) every order of animal has different powers and means of enjoyment. Among men, the diversity of capacities, of constitution, and of habits, arising from climate, or other causes equally out of control, render their conditions almost as various, as if they were different species. The object of justice is not to over-rule this natural law; social institutions are most perfect, which secure to each individual, the fullest enjoyment of every advantage which nature or natural circumstances may have given him. They are unjust, only when artificial arrangements destroy the enjoyment that might

* See Note K. at the end of the volume.

have been left, or the abilities that nature bestowed. The superior has the same right to every advantage he can secure without robbing others, as the inferior; but he has no right to increase the difference in his favour, by laws or customs that cripple the exertions of others.

The social pre-eminence of the male sex to a certain degree, is essential to the well being of society, but can be justified no further than as it is so. Whatever tends to sacrifice one sex to the other, to diminish the happiness, the social utility, or the moral and mental improvement of the weaker, is grounded solely on violence, and is really an injustice. The right of the superior to rule the inferior, as a general proposition, depends altogether on the assumption, that the views and decisions of the stronger mind will be wiser and juster, in other words, more useful to all, than those of the weaker. This they assuredly will. If one party must yield to the other, there can be no doubt with which to intrust the interests of society. Power has an almost inevitable tendency to corrupt the benevolence of the possessor. Its influence over the weaker, would be still worse, (as a general rule,) than over the stronger minds. Yet the corruptions of the latter may be very oppressive and hard to restrain; and just inasmuch as the male sex are tempted to use their power for their own advantage alone, regardless of that of women, they lose their *moral* right to submission. Whenever submission to the abuses of power, is a duty or a merit, it is on grounds totally different from those of the right of the superior.

In many cases it is neither a merit nor a duty to yield to oppression. This is a truth which is always acknowledged, except among those by whom human beings are reduced to the condition of mere property.

Let it not be overlooked, that the inequalities of condition which are derived from nature, are compensated by a proper adaptation of the creature's desires to its condition. Nature apparently withdraws from each animal, even the knowledge of those pleasures, for the acquisition and enjoyment of which she has given them no appropriate faculties. It is evident, that animals can feel no more regret for the powers they never knew, than man himself; probably less; for by his power of abstraction and combination, man can perhaps form some notion of unknown enjoyments, from their possible analogy with those known. Such notions however are but vague and uncertain. How different are the conditions of a man born blind, and of one who has had the misfortune to lose his sight! But the privations inflicted by human institutions, fall upon those whose faculties and desires have been called forth enough, to make them miserable under their loss. It is therefore important, to be sure that no arbitrary privations are inflicted on any branch of the community, except for some advantages, greater than those which are sacrificed.

The subordination that ought to exist, is as clearly deducible from these principles as the freedom. For as we cannot reasonably doubt, that every part of nature is so constituted with respect to every

other, that some good results from the apparent inequalities of happiness; it follows that human institutions, framed without any regard to such natural differences, could not be for the true good of any. Institutions framed without any regard to the inferior strength, mental and bodily, of one sex, would certainly not be for the benefit of society, nor consequently for that of woman herself as a part of society. She is the weaker party, and it is the weaker in every case who benefit most by the perfection to which society may be brought. It is only required that we should ascertain fairly, how far her weakness, with its attendant defects and sufferings, is brought about artificially, by bad education and bad principles.

A bad state of society, may render it expedient to maintain for a time, laws and customs quite indefensible on general grounds, but the sooner we can correct that vicious state of society, which justifies the maintenance of such laws, the better for all parties.

SECTION IV.

Natural Subordination of Women.

The third proposition to be examined, is that the custom of keeping the female sex in a state of subjection is universal, whence it may be thought to be a law of nature. Propositions partly true and partly false, require careful consideration. The subordination of women is a law of nature, their slavery or their depression is not.

In the sketch of their condition contained in the

two first chapters of this work, a sufficient number of instances have been adduced, to prove that the practice of enslaving or depressing the female sex, though very prevalent, has not been quite universal. It is referable to nature, only in the same sense as are wars and cruelties, all our worst vices, and our most odious passions. All spring from nature unregulated by the most essential and distinguishing attribute of humanity—reason. Our passions and affections invite, tempt, solicit; reason only commands. It carries with it an inherent perception, that its dictates ought to be obeyed preferably to all others; so that the naturalness of other motives, however it may palliate our guilt in yielding to them, can never justify such conduct. In a word, inflicting useless privations on women is a vice, just on the same grounds as inflicting them on men. It is natural in no sense except as vice is natural; and accordingly, we find in the varieties of human condition, that as some communities have been exempt from other particular vices, so also some have been exempt from this, or nearly so. But we can find no instance of a community much advanced in civilization, in which that sex is not in some degree subordinate to that of men. By no law of nature, could the weaker in body and mind, be placed precisely on the same footing of social importance, as those who can much better direct the great interests of society. And there is no law of reason why they should.

There are obvious and radical distinctions of character and ability between men and women, which ought to regulate their occupations and their rights.

But the restrictions imposed upon women, should be extended no further than as they tend to promote the utility of the female character to society.

“As avarice and envy are not to be cultivated, because they spring from that love of property and that emulation which are useful, so neither should the force and tyranny of one sex, or the weakness and timidity of the other, be indulged and increased because they are natural; but like all other passions which are hurtful or inconvenient, they should be repressed and modified by education and habit. Such is the intent of society*.”

The power of the strong over the weak is so immoveably fixed in the nature of things, that any attempt to improve the condition of women, if not founded on the assumption that men must hold the chief rule in society, will carry the seeds of failure in its bosom. Every fanciful attempt to place the two sexes on a perfect equality, has ended without the slightest benefit to women. When we view the wide regions of uncivilized life, the first thing that strikes us, is the corruption to both sides, which results from this natural deficiency on the part of the female sex. We cannot but contrast the spirit of tyranny it generates in the one party, and the servility in the other, with the humanizing influence of those bonds of relationship or friendship, which are cemented by a mutual sense of equality. The same individual who is a devoted and generous friend, has sometimes proved a brutal oppressor to his wife; nor is it surprising: for in

* JACKSON'S *Letters from Barbary*.

the rude mind, services received as duties generate contempt,—as free kindness, they generate love and fidelity. But we may be assured there is no natural law without some beneficial uses. Man was designed for civilization, and though, in uncivilized life, the weakness of woman is found to be almost invariably productive of misery, the effect, when reason begins to prevail over barbarism, may perhaps appear very different. There can be no civilization without order, and the progress of order could scarcely be secured, without some provision that should lead mankind, promptly and universally, to a division of labour and duties, into the public and private. The utmost confusion and embarrassment would arise, if it were quite uncertain, which of the two heads of a family should attend to the details of the household, and which pursue the profession or duties that were to provide for their common support. On what principles should education be conducted? It cannot be said that rearing the young would naturally confine the female to the domestic duties; we see that in savage life it does not do so. She is compelled to labour much harder in proportion to her strength than the other sex; she is exempted from nothing that her strength can perform. In civilized life it cannot be supposed that man would labour for her, if she were just as strong and as able, as bold and as daring as himself; all the feminine virtues would cease to exist, or be even imagined, and the whole race be so much the harder and coarser. The confusion would be so great, from the uncer-

tainty which of the two parties should abandon their professional duties, to attend to the details of domestic life, that I think such an awkward condition of society would compel the institution of castes, that a certain portion of the community, might be brought up to particular sorts of employment alone. Let any one but follow out in imagination the details of a condition, in which all the professions and employments of civil life were given indifferently to men or women, as their physical strength might permit. The picture could scarcely be drawn out with seriousness, but the embarrassments would not be the less real because the notion is ludicrous. All inconvenience is avoided by a slight inferiority of strength and abilities in one of the sexes. This gradually develops a particular turn of character, a new class of affections and sentiments that humanize and embellish the species more than any others. These lead at once, without art or hesitation, to a division of duties needed alike in all situations, and produce that order, without which there can be no social progression. In the treatise of *The Hand*, by Sir Charles Bell*, we learn that the left hand and foot are naturally a little weaker than the right; the effect of this is, to make us more prompt and dexterous than we should otherwise be. If there were no difference at all between the right and left limbs, the slight degree of hesitation which hand to use, or which foot to put forward, would create an awkwardness that would operate more or less every moment of our lives, and the

* *Bridgewater Treatise.*

provision to prevent it, seems analogous to the difference nature has made between the strength of the sexes.

Nature, then, having placed the stronger mind where she gave the stronger body, and accompanied it with a more enterprising ambitious spirit, the custom that consigns to the male sex the chief command in society, and all the offices which require the greatest strength and ability, has a better foundation than force, or the prejudices that result from it. The hard, laborious, stern, and coarse duties of the warrior, lawyer, legislator, or physician, require all tender emotions to be frequently repressed. The firmest texture of nerve is required to stand the severity of mental labour, and the greatest abilities are wanted where the duties of society are most difficult. It would be as little in agreement with the nature of things to see the exclusive possession of these taken from the abler sex, to be divided with the weaker, as it is, in the savage condition, to behold severe bodily toil inflicted on the feeble frame of the woman, and the softness of feeling, which nature has provided her with for the tenderest of her offices, that of nurturing the young, outraged by contempt, menaces, and blows.

It is therefore an impartial decree, which consigns all the offices that require the greatest ability to men. For, is it less the interest of woman than of man, that property, life, and liberty, should be secured—that aggression should be quickly and easily repressed—that contentment and order should

prevail instead of tumult? that industry should be well paid—provisions cheap and plentiful—that trade should cover their tables and their persons with the comforts, conveniences, and luxuries which habit has rendered necessary, or an innocent sensibility pleasurable? Is it less momentous to them that religious opinions should be free from persecution—that a wise foreign policy should maintain those blessings in peace, and preserve us from the tribulation of foreign dominion? In objects of less selfish interest, are women less anxious than men, or more so, to see the practice of slavery expelled from the face of the earth? or our colonial government redeemed in every remaining instance, from the stain that has too often attended it, of being numbered with the most oppressive of European?

In the dangerous and difficult sciences of medicine and surgery, is it less important to women than to men, that the life which hangs by a thread, should be trusted to those whose nerves and abilities ensure the greatest skill? or in law, that the decision of rights, the vindication of innocence, should be in the hands of those who can most patiently endure the driest studies, and most boldly follow human nature, through all its various forms and all its foul pursuits?

Ills enough, Heaven knows! ensue from the weaknesses and incapacity of men, but to confer the offices, which demand all the skill and energy that can be had, on those who are weaker still, would be injurious alike to both. The commanding and influ-

ential stations in society belong, therefore, naturally and properly to the male sex: this of necessity entails the chief rule in private life also. But it is here that the rights of women come in, and that the danger of unjust encroachment upon them commences*.

Everything that tends to lessen the comparative purity and refinement of women, is most pointedly adverse to their real interests; these are the qualities that enable them to be the guardians and sustainers of national morals: and their rights must be founded on their natural attributes and their moral dignity. To these respect and consideration cannot be denied, and every step mankind advances in civilisation gives strength to those sentiments. Women have neither the physical strength nor the mental power, to compete with men in the departments which depend on those qualifications; and however little we were to suppose their inferiority, in the long run they would always be defeated and discredited, in their competition for employment with the abler sex. Were so unnatural a state of society to arise, as that they should become the competitors instead of the assistants of man, they would lose their hold on his protection and tenderness, without being able to shield themselves from his harshness. The business of life would be far worse conducted, when the division of labour so clearly pointed out by nature was done away: and the just influence which women ought to have, would be destroyed by breaking down the barrier of opinion, which consigns

* See Note L. at the end of the volume.

them to the duties of a domestic and private station, and preserves them from the contamination of gross and contentious scenes.

But the same arguments that establish the right of the male sex to the sole possession of public authority, must leave the *chief* control of domestic life in their hands also. All the most laborious, the greater and more lucrative social offices, being filled by them, it follows, that generally speaking it is they who produce the wealth and property of society, and the property they create they have assuredly the best right to control; within the rules of virtue and law they may spend it as they will. The children whom the husband supports, the wife who accepts him, engaging to follow his fortunes, must be content to live as he pleases, or as his business requires. This is the law of nature and of reason. If his tastes or his profession be unpleasant to her, she must see to it beforehand; for ever after their interests must be one. In every important decision that is taken, one counsel must prevail: if it cannot be mutual, it must be assigned as a legal right to the owner of the property and the abler sex. Hence he is the head of the family; he must be responsible to law and opinion for the decorum of his house, and must have the power of restraining what he holds to be discreditable or wrong. Happy if he could be made equally responsible, even to his own conscience, for unjustly encroaching on rights which should never be taken from a woman, except for positive vice or incapacity! Her right to all the self-government that can be left to her, without deranging *his*

purposes or *his* enjoyment, is as real as his own; and his purposes and enjoyments are not to be measured by mere pride or fancy, but by reason and justice; even then he remains judge in his own cause. As the right of man to the chief power, public and domestic, has been deduced from his greater ability, so the aptitude of the female mind and character for the details of domestic life, and the improvement of society in manners and morals, establish her rights also to a share of control; otherwise her utility must be greatly impaired, and her enjoyment cruelly and needlessly sacrificed.

The power of the male part of society is not only unavoidably great, but what is far worse, indefinite; for power is both more corrupting and more oppressive by being indefinite than by being great. Between man and man there is so wholesome a jealousy of undefined power, that it is hard for the hand who wields it, to satisfy public opinion. It is a recognised principle, that where it must be confided, it should be guarded by sound views and liberal feelings. But where women are concerned all this is reversed: prejudice runs not in favour of the weaker, but of the stronger. No fixed principle is ever instilled into the mind of a man, as to the grounds or limits of his rights over women; hence his own views of his rights are as vague and indefinite, as his practice must be left, through the absolute impossibility of laying down rules that should meet every case of private life. Even at the celebration of marriage, where in its beautiful and affecting form the vow of obedience is tendered to the wife, it is

unqualified as to the nature of the commands she might receive; and there is not required from the husband, any declaration that he holds his authority for the practice and preservation of justice and order, not for his own interest alone; though, in truth, that vow is neither made, nor received, nor administered, in the unlimited sense conveyed by the terms.

It was observed in a preceding page, that a legal authority which must unavoidably be left indeterminate, particularly required the moral restraint of clear views of justice; for whatever is universally admitted to be just, will be practised in the greatest number of cases. Paley observes that the greatest liar tells truth a hundred times for once that he lies. Society could not go on otherwise. The same may be said of other virtues. The most dishonest man is obliged, by self-interest, to pay much oftener than he cheats. And the same considerations that render men so far honest and true, will render them equally just upon other points, if once convinced it is their best interest. Many people act wrong, only because their ideas of what is right are not clear; and where we observe what the state of opinion upon this subject has hitherto been, we perceive, that instead of a zealous attention to the rights of the weaker, there has been a general disposition to point the finger of scorn against the man who is not sufficiently arbitrary. This leads men, who are too tender or generous, to take pleasure in controlling the tastes or the judgments of their wives, to look on their own noble nature almost as weakness.

In the writings of the last age, or which were popular in those days, this spirit is very apparent. The moralist, the satirist, the religious instructor, with few exceptions, are all on the same side,—either warning off the master-hand from what they call weakness, or totally silent on the contrary extreme, so that, indeed, we might think the tendency of power was to render men too soft-hearted. The very terms in which men are faintly admonished, when the abuse of power is adverted to at all, rather tend to confirm their extravagant notions of their right. Domestic oppression is reproached as a want of indulgence, but not denounced as a shameful injustice. When we consider the history of mankind, and the effect which irresponsible power almost always produces on their conduct, the very term, “an indulgent husband,” speaks volumes as to the general condition of women. It is true that a better spirit has arisen. Men are sometimes brought to the bar of opinion for the use they make of their legal authority. They can no longer be considered as quite irresponsible for the wrongs which they can inflict, under the sanction of law. And, yet, experience may be appealed to, whether in all general discussions on the comforts or ills of married life, the principal test, which most men apply to the question, be not what gives the greatest security for obedience on the part of the wife. In the same spirit, the most passive obedience, and the toleration of the greatest vices have often been represented as the duty of women. The trivial, or low standard of duties and sentiments held up for

the regulation of female conduct, proceed very much from the same prejudice.

It is unpleasant to pass solemn criticisms on playful or beautiful compositions, never intended to injure the cause of women, and in which the satire may be quite just, as directed against a fool or a termagant. There is the less satisfaction in doing so, because a few quotations, however apposite, are insufficient to prove the position, that the spirit in which they are written is, (or at least has been,) a prevalent one. But it is expedient to exemplify what has been stated, that the recollection of the reader may be appealed to for a number of similar passages, to justify these observations.

Nay, look not big, nor stamp, nor stare, nor fret,
I will be master of what is mine own.

She is my goods, my chattels, and my house;
She is my household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.

* * * * *

P. I say it is the moon that shines so bright.

Cath. I know it is the sun that shines so bright.

P. Now by my mother's son, and that's myself,
It shall be moon, or star, or what I list;
Or, ere I journey to your father's house,—
Go on, and fetch our horses back again.

Cath. Forward, I pray, since we have come so far,
And be it moon or sun, or what you please;
And if you please to call it a rush candle,
Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me.

P. I say it is the moon.

Cath. I know it is the moon.

P. Nay, then you lie, it is the blessed sun.

Cath. Then God be bless'd, it is the blessed sun.

* * * * *

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign.

Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
 Even such a woman oweth to her husband;
 And when she's froward, sullen, peevish, sour,
 And not obedient to his honest will,
 What is she but a foul contending rebel
 And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
 I am ashamed that women are so simple,
 To offer war where they should kneel for peace.

Catharine and Petruchio.

It is the subject makes this play popular, for, perhaps, it has fewer striking passages than any other of Shakespeare's.

In the celebrated story of *Griselda*, the merit of the heroine consists in passive submission to fourteen years of continuous outrage to every feeling of tenderness and dignity, that belongs to a woman, inflicted for the purpose of trying whether it were possible to wear out her patience. It has been modernized and published separately, or I should not have referred to it.

In the play of *Wives as They Were and Maids as They Are*, written by Mrs. Inchbald, the pattern characters who are held up for admiration are Lord and Lady Priory. My Lord describes his conduct as follows: "I have always treated my wife according to the ancient mode of treating wives. The ancients seldom gave them liberty to do wrong, but modern wives do as they like."

"And don't you suffer Lady Priory to do as she likes?"

"Yes, when it is what I like too. But never, never else."

"Does not this draw upon you the character of an unkind husband?"

“That I am proud of. Did you never observe, that seldom a breach of fidelity in a wife is exposed, where the unfortunate husband is not said to be the best creature in the world! Poor man, so good-natured! Dotingly fond of his wife! indulged her in everything! How cruel in her to serve him so! Now if I am served so, it shall not be for my good-nature.”

“I am apt to be hasty and passionate, but that is rather an advantage to me, as a husband. It causes me to be obeyed without hesitation; no liberty for contention, tears, or repining. I insure conjugal sunshine by now and then introducing a storm.”

“I have long conceived indulgence to be the bane of female happiness.”

“In ancient days, when manners were simple and pure, did not wives wait at the tables of their husbands? I have taught Lady Priory to practise the same humble, docile obedience, to pay respect to her husband in every shape and every form—no careless inattention to me,” &c.

There is a good deal more in the same style, and among other advantages of his system, he assures the company he has, since his marriage, saved the expense of a valet; for his wife, never being permitted to go out, or enjoy any amusement, has leisure to perform the duties of one, by waiting upon him.

The piece concludes by all the persons of the drama being so charmed with the effects of Lord Priory's system, that the dissipated heroine, in giving her hand to her suitor, declares her determination to imitate Lady Priory. The libertine resolves to marry

immediately, provided a heartless coquet, with whom he had been trifling, will promise submission to the same control; and the lady accepts this tempting offer, because, she says, "any control is better than to have no chief magistrate at all."

The Jealous Wife is an excellent play; and the character of Mrs. Oakley is admirably drawn, but the tenderness and affection of Mr. Oakley are purposely made ridiculous and contemptible, and the profligate Major, whose ideas of women (says his brother) have been picked up in taverns and the camp, is held up as the wiser of the two, and the best teacher how to deal with a wife.

I need scarcely remind the reader of the manner in which Lord Chesterfield warns his son, never to treat a woman like a rational creature, or of Swift's letter to a lady who is going to be married.

In one of the stories of the work entitled *Diary of a Physician*, the author, intending to paint the character of a perfect wife, represents her as an unresisting victim to such utter degradation, that at length an emotion of contempt mingles itself with the compassion she excites. This work is quite recent. It is written with the best feeling towards women, and intended to direct odium against the tyrant the author describes. But he had not been able to divest his mind of the idea, that it was meritorious in a woman to submit to degradation, the endurance of which would have exposed a man to the deserved scorn of all generous minds. What does the idea rest upon, that the mind of a woman is less debased by servility to vice than that of a man? The passive

slave of a licentious tyrant, being familiarized with vice and tyranny till he has lost all loathing for them, is naturally inferred to be as insensible to virtue as to vice. Why is not the same inference drawn with respect to women? The only imaginable answer is, that as care is taken not to raise the views of women as high as those of the other sex, but to inure them early to ideas of dependence, their feelings really are not as much degraded by submission to the vices of others, as those of men are. I believe this to be true. The minds of women are not always degraded by the tolerance of vice and tyranny. There is a cast of character among women, compounded of submissive tenderness, and a purity which will not receive a moral taint. But it is a very peculiar one; and as a common rule, I would ask, is it desirable that the minds of the British nation should be formed by those, who have little dignity instilled by their education?

The instances quoted have been taken at random, from the first that occurred, and are sufficient to recall the reader's attention to many similar sentiments, scattered through a multitude of common-place works. Different opinions will prevail, as the education of women becomes better. Opinion is already very much changed in their favour. It is impossible not to be struck with the increased liberality of feeling upon this subject, that breaks out among men, upon occasions in which they have no personal interest or passion roused to pervert them. The resistance to mere whims or arbitrary notions, to which men might be exposed from the rectified judgment

of women, (who would yield rather from reason or affection than contented servility,) would be less irritating than the opposition to their just wishes, which men now so frequently experience from the petulance of ill-regulated tempers, who resist, not when they ought, but when they can. Nothing produces a more willing obedience, than a thorough conviction of the reasonableness of subordination, and a clear view of the limits to authority. But indefinite control is always liable to provoke either a spirit of resistance, or a system of art, because the mind, never knowing what to prepare for, can never adapt its habits to its circumstances. It is not yielding to the just prerogative but to the vices of others, that either debases the mind, or wets the pillow with nightly tears. Women have such great control over education and the formation of opinion, that it rests very much with them to spread the conviction, that neither law nor custom can justify one human being for depriving another of the common rights of rational agents. They who push their interference beyond what is due to the interests of their profession, their duties as heads of families, and the indulgence of their own conscientious tastes and pleasures, have no sanction for their conduct, but the power of the strong over the weak. And when it is exercised to force acquiescence in wrongs of affection, that wither the very soul of a wife, in vices that disgrace society and may bring their contagion on her children, what exercise of tyranny can be more degrading to the man, and more cruel to his victim? However difficult for legislation to define or prevent such aggressions, it is,

at least, possible for opinion to discountenance them.

When the real interests of society, necessarily impose sacrifices on one party from which another is free, what moral principle can be clearer than that such sacrifices should be reduced to the least possible? But when we proceed to the exactions of mere pride, folly, or vice, submission to these, however unavoidable, just doubles their evils to society. If one parent disgrace his household by intemperance, or violence, and the other assent to it as if it were all right, the children are misled by two parents instead of one. If one person set the example of vice to society, and another be compelled to yield him respect and obedience, vice has the countenance of two members instead of one. The end of society is the maintenance of virtue and happiness; if the virtue of one member be destroyed by his vices, and the happiness of another be destroyed by the consequences of them, there is a double amount of evil in society. I beg to observe, that this argument is used only to exhibit the ill consequences of laws and customs, adapted to compel the endurance of wrong rather than to assist in restraining it. It does not justify acrimony, violence, or insult in resistance to domestic oppression. These are the worst methods that can be adopted by the strong towards the weak; by the weak towards the strong, they are preposterous.

A person with an arbitrary temper, and a high moral character, frequently justifies his perpetual and teasing interference, by some solemn reason for the prevention of every free movement he steps in to

overrule. This is indeed the delusion, which, in every relation of social life, leads man from the generosity of the hero, to the selfishness of the despot. For how few are they who do not cloke their violences to their own eyes, by some show of justice? Who says to himself, "This will I prevent, that I may check so much innocent enjoyment"—"That will I enforce, that I may embitter life with cares and mortifications." But the susceptibility of an indulged will, first converts a trifle into a great matter, makes it a mine of crime or danger, and then the pride of power acts with self-satisfaction.

Even when authority is most sincerely guided by conscience, experience has fully proved, that the attempt to rule everything is a mistake. Whether in education, government, or domestic economy, the attempt to regulate everything may succeed in repressing a good many petty mal-practices, but it is at the expense of that candour, and that vigour of principle and of judgment, which are the growth only of freedom. Thus a character is fashioned, of great form and regularity in trifles, but great moral deficiencies. When not successful, the system fails to produce even the timid and petty virtues; and whether in education or government, the human mind bursts forth into open resistance and a contempt for all authority. It would be well, were it possible, to check every defect and every folly, but it is not possible. Experience has proved that the attempt leads to vices and miseries, much greater than such faults and errors as do not unhinge society.

The fallible lawgiver to the fallible creature, has always proved of the two so much the greater foe to the interests of humanity, that philosophers have ever directed their speculations to the best means of enlarging the freedom, rather than increasing the restraints of the subject. The more that can be left safely to the moral sentiments of mankind, and to the decisions of their own judgment, the better for all parties, the master as well as the governed. For this reason, nature has made the love of liberty the most unconquerable desire, of all that submit to the restraints of civilization; and it is never extinguished without carrying with it many of our best virtues.

SECTION V.

Comparative Condition of Men and Women.

That the laborious and anxious pursuits of professional and political life, are upon the whole a source of superior happiness to the male sex, no reasonable doubt can be entertained. Man is formed for industry, action, and enterprise. Ambition and hope are the springs of his existence. Those propensities and passions, which in barbarous life lead to wars and cruelties that tend to destroy the species, in the public, professional, and industrious occupations of a civilized community, are directed into beneficial channels; in which, while they animate existence, they lose much of their turbulence and irregularity. But it is only in the aggregate, that those occupations can be regarded as such a superior privilege. They are mixed with a very large propor-

tion of cares and sufferings. Often the labour comes without the reward; and often, hope and ambition outgrow the means of gratification, and produce discontent which nothing within the range of probability can appease.

If eminence could be reached by a bound, however daring and dangerous, it would be every man's desire; but the slow prospects of regular industry are no great incitements to men of ordinary minds. In the daily and common business of life, the hopes of emolument and the prospects of future distinction, are not kept steadily in sight, but the hours of dulness and restraint are faithfully numbered. Most men who have either spirit or ability, entertain sufficient contempt for absolute idleness, to prefer, at least in idea, the trammels of a profession. There are very few who would not like to engage in some eventful enterprise, somewhat, in short, that as nearly as possible resembled gambling for life. It is seldom however that civil employments are so exciting, and upon the whole, it may be said that the duties of professional, and even of political life, are undertaken less frequently for ambition than for subsistence,—for the comfort and pleasures of domestic life which are attained by exertion. It is the hard-earned leisure which is sought for, whether to be spent in the quiet of domestic affections, or the animation of social intercourse.

Far from the shore, when dark'ning clouds increase,
Nor moon nor guiding star its signal throws,
Then cries the storm-vext mariner for peace,
And home repose.

Peace from alarms, the warlike Thracians cry,
(Graceful in arms) for peace the quivered Mede,
Peace which no costly gems, no gold can buy,
No honour speed.

Nor treasured heap, nor armed lictor, scares
The gath'ring tumult from the troubled breast,
Or from the gilded roof the winged cares,
That never rest.—HORACE.

Here, then, is the abode in which the dearest interests of both sexes are centered, and in which their hopes, their efforts, their affections, are the same. It is a goodly soil, but if unkindness or oppression unite with the common chances of mortality and disease to blight its springing pleasures, then let woman weep, for she has nothing else to look to. Here no law can penetrate for her protection. She may have pity, but not redress.

Except in extreme cases, we cannot define what is domestic oppression, and what is not. Personal cruelty can be defined, but that would sometimes be the lesser evil.

Between government in public and private affairs there is this difference. In public life it is not every man who rules, but only the abler members. There are indeed many exceptions, but generally speaking, in the competition for power, talent succeeds in jostling the feeble as well as the honest into the background, and egregious incapacity can be kept in office by nothing but hereditary rank. In private life, on the contrary, the weakest man has the same power as the wisest, over the joint property on which his family depends. When the property brought by a woman is considerable, a portion is sometimes

consigned to her own control; but in general, settlements provide for a woman only in the case of her husband's death; during his life, she is left almost absolutely dependent upon him. Thus the double chance of prudential management, which the family might have by a more equitable distribution, is lost through the joint influence of law and custom. The disposition of both parties is usually well known to those who make the terms of the settlements, for they are their own parents and guardians. With respect to the future husband, they generally do consider his habits and propensities with great jealousy, and not unfrequently restrict his power over his own property so much, as to embarrass him all his life. But this caution is more for his children and the security of family honour and property, than for his wife's present advantage. In the disposal of the income, thus jealously preserved from dissipation, she has seldom any share. Her friends are content with providing against family ruin from the husband's extravagance; no prudence and discretion she may ever have evinced, is held to entitle her to a greater share of control over present expenditure, than if giddy and thoughtless. After marriage, indeed, it commonly happens that a prudent and reasonable man, whose personal management would be excellent, does leave to his wife all the control she ought to have; but when his own courses are evil, the first warning she has of their ruin is from seeing him get letters that cloud his brows and sour his temper, and the next is the threat of executions.

Through the misleading influence of power, undefined by law or by customary interpretation, men are not ashamed to exact, or accept compliances so at variance with the spirit of justice, that as rational agents they themselves would not, and feel that they ought not, to yield such to any human power whatever.

Gregory, in his *Essays, Historical and Moral*, after some comments on the authority which the constitution of nature and society must leave in the hands of the male sex, observes that, constituted as society now is, women are exposed to such sufferings from domestic tyranny, that the most extreme caution is necessary, as to the hands into which they commit their destiny. He then proceeds to warn them against trusting to a man who has been a confirmed libertine, because, though he may have forsaken his vices, an ill opinion of women always remains with him. He advises them to avoid bigots, and men who have no religious principle, and to be very cautious how they commit their fate to a man, whose profession obliges him to be conversant with the low and vicious part of mankind, or which habituates him to high notions of discipline and implicit obedience. These are excellent observations as far as they go, but they do not extend to the general improvement in the condition of women, which their own education might produce by its influence on opinion.

It has been affirmed, that the authority of the husband preserves amity better than terms of greater equality would. This assumption deserves examina-

tion, because it is true of defined authority,—it is not true of undefined, but quite the reverse. No human being ever yet resigned themselves to unconditional, unhesitating, universal surrender of their own will and judgment to those of another person; no, not the poorest slave who ever trembled at the lash. God does not demand such submission from his creatures. His commands are all definite, and far the greater number of our actions are left free, to be determined by our own desires. Therefore, where the limits of authority are undefined, resistance springs up, instigated by impatience, peevishness, or the temptation of some present passion, very likely to be wrong. Discord and reproach ensue, obstinacy or evasion are generated. The principle of submission can acquire no definite habits, no fixed conduct, when the degree or the occasion of compliance can never be foreknown.

Servility and fraud are nearly inseparable. But in amiable women, in whom it is impossible to destroy candour and gentleness, this indefinite restraint, this never knowing when or where the bridle will check their free movements, or the spur goad their weariness, (whether it proceed from the temper of their parents or their husbands,) commonly produces a dejection of spirits, alike injurious to mind and body, to themselves and to their offspring. Girls so brought up at home, in after life usually become peevish, melancholy companions,—insignificant and disregarded mothers.

Where the bounds of authority are acknowledged and definite, very different effects follow. It is by a

judicious and liberal system of subordination, that society is organized, and brought to perfection. Command and obedience, to some extent, are indispensable to every section of society that consists of a union of parts. If there be no chief, there must be laws and regulations that supply his place, otherwise there would be no action. It has already been shown that the nearest approaches to perfect equality are amongst the rudest savages; and it is a condition that is incompatible with improvement. Control is therefore beneficial, when regulated by reason, so that the parties know the bounds of their rights and their duties. A character of self-command and fidelity, may be produced by habits of obedience to duties that are definite, practicable, and convincing to the mind. But to render them so, the restraints of authority should be as few as possible, as explicit as possible, and as absolute as possible. The first, to check those perpetual interferences with every action, which, like a swarm of musquitoes, fret the temper more than some great privation, to which, once for all, the mind may learn to accommodate itself. The second, that the persons subject to authority may understand clearly how to fulfil their obligations, and in other matters feel themselves free and at peace, for this is what preserves the spirit and character of freedom, with the social advantages of subordination. The third, that in the minds of the weak or perverse, there may be as little hesitation as possible, whether they shall obey or not, so that the uneasiness of the restraints, whatever they are, may be speedily relieved by the influence of habit.

These rules are as true and as valuable, in families as in governments, for they depend on human nature, though they admit of some modification from the difference of circumstances. In a state, the king or governor, (whatever his actual practice may be,) is held to be placed there solely for the good of the governed; his own interest and pleasure are understood to be quite second to those of his people. It is not exactly the same in a family. There, every man is entitled to control, not only what he thinks wrong, but also whatever interferes with his own personal comfort and happiness. In the case of a king, the interests of one individual are compared with those of the whole nation,—there is no doubt which ought to give way. In the case of the sexes, the question is between the two parts of the whole human race. Much of this argument has been to prove, that it is an outrage both to reason and nature, to make the one half a total sacrifice to the other. But if the weak ought not to be sacrificed to the strong, neither ought the strong to the weak. And as it is chiefly by the male sex, collectively taken, that the property of society is both created and defended, it is very clear that their interests have the first claim to consideration. Society must be governed by general rules, and therefore, whatever rights, reason and justice may concede to the mother of a family, the rights of the father must as certainly be paramount. In reality, the interests of the parties are never at variance; it is vice which creates perplexity.

In education, control must be still greater, and

nature has fitted the minds of the young to bear it without pain. Their spirits are buoyant, and they have little reflection. Yet restraint must not be overdone; the principles above given should never be lost sight of, for if the parents' commands be not definite and limited by reason, no mental habits will be formed. If restraint be continually felt, fraud will be continually practised, and the temper spoiled. The arbitrary, capricious, and uncertain restraints, by which the female character is often made weak and artful, do not proceed solely from the other sex. The judgment and temper of women, being depraved by a bad system, produce towards a new generation, a repetition of the same petty tyranny they experienced. It frequently happens, that where the father is all goodness and indulgence, the mother is a restraint upon the whole circle, and often, less from ill-nature than from knowing no better. Ignorant of human nature, and without any clear ideas of the use or just limits of her power, she mistakes the suggestions of her own fancy for the dictates of reason, and thinks every one refractory, whose patience is exhausted with the constant fretting of the curb, or their power of attention baffled, by the innumerable and minute orders to which it is called. The youth of the other sex cannot be kept under precisely the same restraint. Their minds, therefore, receive less injury; but home is made hateful to them, and the lessons of virtue and prudence, conveyed so disagreeably, appear petty and irksome.

The control of others, when carried to excess,

always tends, more or less, to destroy self-control. This is not inconsistent with the salutary effects attributed to discipline. The uncivilized and the uneducated, upon many points, and those often the most important, have no self-control at all, and few habits but that of self-indulgence. Judicious discipline gives both in the end, good habits and self-control, and till they are generated, the restraints of authority are further useful, for the same reason that they are so to madmen; they restrain immediate and positive mischief*. All that is herein contended for, is, that discipline itself requires to be disciplined, otherwise it may fail completely, to give either good habits or self-control. For, though practising obedience will create the habit of obedience, yet that may be the *sole* habit that is acquired. If the lessons of virtue and prudence are made irksome, or left unconvincing, the will may continue in rebellion against them, notwithstanding habitual submission to the commands of a superior. Even conviction of the *expediency* of moral conduct, may be deficient in those whose understanding has been left uncultivated, while their obedience has been unsparingly insisted on.

If the restraints imposed on the young man, whose case is mentioned in the note, had been for capricious or trivial purposes in which his understanding could have discerned no use, he would have acquired no other habit but that of submitting quietly to force; when the force was withdrawn, no habit would have remained. But as every act of compulsion had been for a reasonable purpose, he

* See Note M. at the end of the volume.

had been brought to discern the utility of that purpose. It is true that, while he was under the influence of the malady for which he was treated, he could have no perception of any other utility, except that which related to his own personal interest. This was at first the only motive that could be appealed to, but through it he learned the advantage of controlling his violence, and he acknowledged that he had never been so happy before.

Thus it was, that while rigid necessity was habituating him to endure the solicitations of his own impetuosity, without yielding to them, he was at the same time acquiring the habit of governing his actions, by the considerations of the personal inconvenience he should suffer, if he gave way to his passion. In other words, he learned to obey a principle instead of an impulse, and that is self-control. A faculty was given, by which afterwards, whenever he was convinced that good conduct was his interest, he would have the power to practise it.

In this case, there was no motive to appeal to but self-interest. It was a case of disease. In general, there are many other and more generous motives, that can be excited in the breasts of the young. But when attention is not paid to implanting a principle, coercion, instead of giving self-control, actually tends to destroy it. The habit of submitting to authority without any reference to the reason of things, tends to prevent even the formation of judgment and principle. Authority, though guided by affection and gentleness, may have that effect. There is no more effectual way of enfeebling the human cha-

racter, than to have a conscience-keeper. Some of the ill effects attributed to the Catholic religion, are justly referred to that cause. The most general defect in the education of girls is, that whether kindly or harshly treated, they are too much guided by others. In the formation of character two things are necessary, the *power* of self-control, and the *will to exert it*. If either be deficient, the education will be a failure. For example, young persons never inured by early coercion to resist their impulses, if convinced in after life of the duty of sober-mindedness, would probably go on day after day, making good resolutions, and yet yielding to every temptation, thinking right, and acting wrong, till they became accustomed to the reproaches of conscience, and ceased to regard them.

On the other side, pupils compelled by authority to resist the natural desires of youth for amusement, and to spend their time in spiritless restraint, are, indeed, acquiring the power of resisting their desires, but it does not follow that they are learning to respect the principle of sober-mindedness. They may see nothing in the restraints they have endured, but the loss of so much enjoyment. The only habit that has held to their mind, has been that of submission; when authority, therefore, ceases to act, there is no principle remaining to supply its place. The right motive has not been given; the judgment has not been practised to consider the reasons of things, and the mind has not learned responsibility to the internal monitor, as well as to external authority.

The experience of both sexes may be appealed to, whether it be not a matter of common observation, that persons accustomed never to act without orders, frequently neglect duties which they would have performed faithfully, if they had been responsible for them solely to their own sense of propriety. They who are accustomed to young people or servants, are fully aware how often they cast aside all regard to the admonitions of their own judgment, when taught to refer too exclusively to that of their parents or masters.

“It is his business, not mine.” “He knows better than I.” “I need not reason about the matter.” “As he has given me no orders, I need take no trouble.” In certain relations of life, and on some occasions, this may be all that is required; but no one will pretend, that principle is acquiring any strength while the mind is in this state. Accordingly, the young are made for years to perform the same duties every day at the same hour, and yet drop them without scruple, and for ever, the first moment they are released from compulsion. The only habit, that has been really forming all the time, may have been that of submission to one individual. Hence, we see instances of persons who have broken through every restraint of feeling and principle, but who, like the tyrant Tiberius, (as related by Tacitus,) are still afraid to resist some individual who has no power to wield, but the voice and the eye they had been accustomed to submit to*.

It may therefore be laid down as a general

* His mother Livia. See TACITUS' *Annals*.

maxim, that the habit of reposing on the decisions of others generates moral feebleness. It is the impending danger, even where the ruling authority is just and wise, but how few are so habitually! How few are they who do not betray their human infirmity by many caprices! how much fewer they in whom the possession of power does not generate them! In ordinary characters, selfishness and pride soon spread their dominion, even though united with many captivating and estimable qualities; and in such circumstances the weak, who are under the control of such persons, whether actuated by fear or affection, wind their way through their difficulties by subterfuge.

There is an ill-defined notion in the heads of some persons of both sexes, that the love due to themselves ought to overrule all the strongest laws of human nature, the force of natural temperament, long settled habit, and even the commanding influence of established principles. "If you love me, you would not oppose me in this," is an argument full of truth and force on some occasions; for to behold the happiness of a beloved object really at stake, is a motive which nothing but the most sacred obligations are expected to overrule. But to apply the sentiment daily, to every trifle in the course of life, to common actions and common thoughts, and expect its high excitement to be always at hand, is mere romance,—the romance of pride and selfishness. They too who urge the argument, are frequently, at the same moment forgetting that their own love is not preventing them from pertinaciously insisting on some painful concession.

When a man holds the opinion, that there are no limits to his authority over his wife, except the remote and indefinite bounds set by the laws of his country, it generates that pertinacity about trifles, which frequently presents such a strange inconsistency with the assumption of superior sense. In truth, he does not really care for the trifle in dispute, but he is haunted by the fear of being governed. "Shall I not be master in my own house?" tempts him to insist upon ruling, merely because he has happened to express an opinion, and in matters, which (if there is to be any such thing at all as a rational division of duties,) had better be regulated by those, whose particular convenience is most concerned.

The vagueness of their own power, tempts men to be regardless of the habits and tastes of the women they marry. "I will put an end to this," "I shall not suffer that when I am married," these notions lead them first to draw a young creature into marriage, unconscious of the sacrifices she will be called on to make; and secondly, they lead men into the error of supposing, that because they can control the means of indulgence, they will suffer nothing themselves, from uncongenial tastes, and an irritated temper.

A bad consequence of the depression of women is its teaching them to despise themselves. What can be expected from those who have lost self-respect? They affect follies and vices they have not. Actuated by petty passions instead of generous or even earnest ones, they seek their individual interests by servile crouching to the pride of the other sex.

To their faces they load them with praise, and behind their backs, laugh with each other at the fulsome adulation they made them swallow. They take part against the injured of their own sex, and applaud the sneers and sarcasms which the attempts of women to raise themselves above the scale of triflers fail not to meet with in the world.

Before marriage, the condition of women is frequently so depressed, that a marriage with any man of respectability, however unsuited to their taste, or faulty in temper, is the least of two evils. Destitute as they already are of any heart-filling affection, they gain at least some station in society, and some pursuit in the avocations of a home. In their father's house, it too often happens that, without any intentional unkindness, nothing is theirs. In childhood, this is no evil. The mind of youth is so elastic, the spirits so volatile, that nothing checks happiness, except present and positive harshness. 'Theirs is "the tear forgot, as soon as shed."' They live in the present; amusement is their highest idea of happiness, and they find amusement in everything that is variety. But soon a great change takes place,—the heart and the head demand fuller and more earnest occupation. The present is no longer enough. Hope and pursuit become necessary to the full grown creature; but a meagre education has left her nearly incapable of the latter, and dull restraint has compelled the tenacious vitality of the former to run wild among deceitful and dangerous regions. Even if disposed to self-improvement, a disposition which very slender opportunities sometimes arouse very

strongly, what, under such circumstances, can women do who remain many years unmarried? The first and best portion of life, while health and faculties are in their highest vigour, perhaps till the age of five and thirty or more, is spent without the command of money, or of their own time, or the choice of their own mode of life, whether retired or social; unable to pass a short time from home, except by permission, and almost without the power of cultivating a friendship. Surely there seldom has been a system more calculated to prevent the formation of judgment and experience, and to blight those years that are flying past for ever.

Certainly, whatever the age or the prudence of a woman, while she receives the protection of her parents' roof, she must conform to their habits. This is no more than the common condition of social life. Men and women alike are controlled in their tastes and pursuits by circumstances to which they must yield. But why impose privations that are needless, that are mischievous? There is no evil in the holy duty of sacrificing time and amusement to those who, in their day, gave up everything to the care of our precarious and peevish infancy. But where is the justice of accepting or extorting sacrifices, which rob the mind of the young of its health, and add nothing that reason will sanction to the happiness of the old?

The delicacy of a woman's reputation, the irreparable injury she suffers from indiscretions far short of criminality, her want even of personal protection, and the solid advantages she gains, by being this

creature of purity, render it her true interest to remain under the protection of the aged and experienced. But the ill-judged restraint in which young women pass their lives prevents their ever acquiring experience for themselves. The valuable opportunity of practising self-guidance, under the eye of those who could step in to prevent real danger, is lost. The best and tenderest parents take too little pains to replace that healthy direction, given by professions to the minds of men, by an education that would enlarge women's views of their duties. Such narrow limits are set to their standard of excellence, that the powers which nature has given them are crippled rather than improved by education.

Women cannot have the same degree of excitement as men, but neither do they require it. Less active and enterprising by nature, they do well in a more confined sphere of action, but they cannot do without any. There will be contentment and perfection for woman as for man, in her limited sphere, so that the limits be fixed by the nature of things, and not the stinting of art.

Before I conclude this chapter, I shall endeavour to sanction the opinions it contains by quotations from a writer*, whose sentiments on the subject are the most liberal of any I have met with.

* The quotations, being taken from various parts of the supposed "instruction to a rising colony," and from letters on more general subjects, will not be found together, nor in the same order in the book, as in this place, where they are arranged in a manner more consistent with the plan of the present work. In some instances, for the purpose of compression, the substance only of the original has been given.

“Here,” says Jackson, in his *Letters from Barbary*, “the separation of the women is the great impediment to all the advances of the species, and one of the many pernicious consequences of the subordination of one sex to the other. I think even with us the sexes retiring so much from one another seldom proceeds from any good motive and has no good effects. In the history of nations you will see how manners and opinions have changed to contrary extremes; you may contemplate Spartan mothers exciting their sons to war and glory, and some modern mothers dreading to expose theirs even to the weather.

“If you dignify their character by a free and manly education, and keep them to a near resemblance with yourselves, they in return will temper and refine your manners, and without the danger of rendering you or your sons too effeminate; so that you will meet half way, and being more alike and better acquainted than formerly, objects of intercourse will multiply and you will be fitter company for each other. I have thought,” says he, (in treating of the causes that misdirect our advances in knowledge and art, and lead finally to decay,) “that the best remedies to these evils may be hoped for, from the admission of women to a better education and more influence in the councils of taste and learning; and it might be as well, perhaps, if they were not *entirely* excluded from any other councils. We know from Sparta, that a wise government might do much towards modelling their character, and directing their education towards the public good.

I would have both sexes to join in *some degree*, and each to lend the helping hand of relief whenever it is possible. Women might be of great use in all the sedentary and learned professions.

“It is desirable that a right division of public labour, between corporate bodies and individuals, should bring all the powers of both sexes into activity. The share of the female part should be the formation of opinion and the circulation of knowledge; to improve them, their views must be raised. At present they are the great upholders of arbitrary power, love of rank, and superstition. Women might do much towards disseminating a general spirit of veracity. But the nature of female education at present does more harm by the bounds it sets to moral and intellectual elevation, than it does good by what it teaches; women, if left wholly to themselves, participate much more in the characters of men. Nor can I conceive with some that we should have less, but certainly more conjugal happiness in the world, by an increase of female wisdom and knowledge, by means of more numerous and more important objects of mutual intercourse and employ; I have known examples that confirm me in this opinion*. Strength of body and mind are perfectly compatible with softness and gentleness of manner. Beauty belongs more to strength than to weakness, and force is essential to grace.

“Many of those female weaknesses, which we term delicacy and pretend to admire, we secretly laugh at, or when our taste is vitiated so far as really to like

* See Note N. at the end of the volume.

them, it is chiefly from their being symptoms of inferiority and subordination, that soothe and feed our pride and domineering spirit. Men subject to the mean fear or jealousy of female learning are certainly not the fittest to dictate, and they who do so are not usually the most learned or manly of men. Women should assuredly be so educated as to take the lead, *well* and *wisely*, in the fine arts and in elegance of every kind, personal and intellectual. But while we preclude them from every occupation that gives them self-importance, from all management of public and even of their own affairs, we have no right to complain of the consequences, of which a life and character of idleness and dissipation may be among the least pernicious. To attempt depriving them of their natural influence would be futile, and beginning at the wrong end; rather qualify them to exert it to some good purposes. We might as well expect in mechanics a self motion that should begin, continue, and end without a cause, as expect from human beings the duties of society, without sufficient motive and control. The less people are trusted the worse they are. Confidence creates the virtues it assumes. The less people manage their own concerns, the less responsibility, the less conscience they will have. The young and the governed repose on the judgment of their seniors, and content themselves with doing, or seeming to do as they are bid. In proportion as people are influenced by force or authority, they become languid, weak, and indolent; under opposite circumstances, all their powers increase by exercise. Some, it is true, will

go wrong; but the increase of evil will not be commensurate to the good. Neither is any evil essentially inseparable from liberty.

“Though we act the tyrants over the female part of society with more politeness than in former and rude times, yet all the romantic nonsense of modern gallantry and affected regard for the sex, the remains of chivalry, though better than nothing, we know to be an insufficient restraint on man, on his real power and assumed superiority. I fear, nothing but legal and acknowledged equality, and a liberal education, can secure to women their natural rights and influence.”

In the course of this chapter, I have so fully declared that the social position of women must ever be subordinate to that of the other sex, that I cannot omit to observe on the above terms, “legal and acknowledged equality,” that nothing in the writings of this author leads to taking women out of their own sphere. That all men are equal in the eye of the law is the boast of the English constitution; legal and acknowledged equality, therefore, is consistent with social subordination, and tends to preserve to each party, the peculiar privileges which are reasonably and rightfully theirs.

Natural differences create forms of superiority which nothing can destroy; the weak and the strong, the rational and irrational, can never be on a level. Social differences, such as the privileges of rank and authority, are (or ought to be) created for the advantage of all. The office of justice is to control and direct both to the benefit and service of mankind.

It is right to leave power with the strong and the able, where strength and ability are most useful—it is not right to do so, where the extension of comfort and happiness requires a different rule. It is right to defer to station and rank, where those institutions promote order and gentleness—it is not right to defer to them on points with which they have no relation. Such I think is the common sentiment of mankind; and therefore when parties are said to be legal and acknowledged equals, it may counteract an assumption of superiority on points to which the rights of the party do not extend, but it cannot be opposed to their just pretensions. All gentlemen are said to be equal; but under the term gentlemen the highest nobles of the land are included: the equality is understood of their moral and personal respectability. The deference due to the possessors of rank or authority, on every point to which their privileges extend, is always courteously and willingly granted; but a man of sense and spirit takes care they shall never transgress their just limits. To treat the opinions and feelings of others with that neglect and contempt, which is not due to the want of a title or wealth, but only to folly and meanness, is senseless and unfeeling. To yield to the graceless deficiencies of a great man an applause not due at all to his rank, but which affects to be paid to his merit, is fulsome and hypocritical. An assumption of superiority should never appear except in defence of duties or rights; and when persons of rank betray that disregard of inferiors in station, which is due only to moral meanness, it is mere arrogance. What renders the contempt shown to

women peculiarly offensive is, that it has inevitably the last character. Their social rank being usually the same as that of the male part of their family, the marks of disesteem they receive seem always moral and personal; and they are the more galling, because, being directed to the sex in general, the individual feels that her own conduct can do nothing to redeem her.

When we consider the force which justice has over the minds of most men, in every dispassionate hour, it is reasonable to believe, that clearing our ideas upon that subject from the prejudices which obscure it, and which are the growth of old customs, is an essential step towards applying its protection to women. And can it be doubted, that to prove the advantage to all society, of extending its principles to the rights of that sex, will dispose the minds of both sexes to trying a better system than the past?

The power and privileges of women are increasing rapidly. Is it better they should do so, under the guidance of passion and accident, than of reason? If they must advance in influence, it is of great importance to see that they be wisely prepared for it.

Whatever the cynical censures we pass, when disheartened and disgusted by the vices of the times, conjugal happiness is more frequent than ever, and instances are daily increasing, where the hand of authority is never felt, except to smooth the path, or protect the weakness of the object of affection. If women were better educated, it could not fail to add

to the number. It is not possible to be as capricious and arbitrary towards those who command respect, as towards those who have little claim, except to indulgence and compassion. There may be men of violent and uncontrollable tempers, who have too little sensibility to the merit of others to be influenced by it. But these are the partners whom every woman of feeling should avoid. They are fittest matched with female fortune-hunters, who have little tenderness and no dignity to be wounded. Women who are content with the goods of fortune, and are willing to trust to their own cunning for securing their share of them in spite of their masters, are often possessed of the power of pleasing, — lively companions, full of address, good managers, and very prudent, they are sufficiently good for men of such characters.

Opinion, which has already given to women so much more station and influence than formerly, can be advanced by nothing so much as by the moral and mental improvement of women themselves. It has for ever shaken the relations of tyrant and slave. Every man would prefer resting his claims to the subordination of the other sex on its reasonableness, rather than on his own force. Her whom he is bound to protect by his arm from danger and insult, and by his wider experience of mankind from imprudence and temptation, he deems, (and with reason,) he is entitled in some degree to control and to regulate. But if he convert subordination to servility, protection is but a name. Laws lose their sanction when the penalty is less dreadful than obedience;

for it is better to die than live degraded. The rights of human nature may be outraged, but never can be abrogated. He who, from a notion of superiority, whether of understanding, power, rank, or anything else, pretends to be exonerated from the obligations of justice towards others, at the same moment absolves them from their obligations toward him. No such relation as duty can exist to mere power unsanctified by the justice or benevolence of its operations. Submission to wrong, whenever it is a duty or merit at all, is so on grounds quite different from the supposed right of the oppressor*. A villain may deserve death, yet the person aggrieved by him may owe it to society not to take vengeance with his own hand. The life that is spared to the villain, and the obedience that is rendered to the oppressor, are for the sake of society. But if the laws of society hold out temptation and encouragement to such foes of human happiness, and protect them in their violence, they are bad laws, and require alteration.

As freedom, without the restraints of law and subordination, would defeat its own ends, so power unlimited by the justice due to the governed, leaves its possessor insecure. The condition of despotism has been of long duration, only because knowledge and civilization are slow in progress. Its stability is but the stability of ill to both parties; for in the stagnation of intelligence which it produces, malignant passions are generated, that encompass the couch of the tyrant with the same dangers he holds

* See Note O. at the end of the volume.

over the heads of his subjects. He is not secure for an hour. He whose voice in the morning swept the earth like a pestilence, lies in the evening sightless and bleeding, fettered by his own slaves. Despots are safe and at peace, chiefly as the extreme exercise of power is repressed by the example and opinions of surrounding free nations. Neither a fettered press, nor guarded barriers, can wholly exclude the echoes of freedom, and it is found necessary to keep the people contented and incurious, by giving them comfort and peace. When such is not the case, tyrants in confused succession rise and vanish like spectral illusions, and nothing of their history remains upon the mind, but an impression of horror for them, and contempt for their slaves. In tamer and quieter scenes, a domestic oppressor may be resistless when in conflict; but he cannot be omniscient; he is deceived, shunned, baffled, eluded; he is himself, weary, indolent, remiss; and every hour of daily life brings defeat to his purposes, and irritation to his pride. Unhappily, the station in which the liberty and power acquired by women are greatest and most striking is in high life, where moral corruption, if not really greater, is necessarily more conspicuous than anywhere else. It is such as to dishearten the advocates for the rights of women, and give a strong handle to their opponents. The reason that the progress of female liberty has been attended with such evils, is that it has not always sprung on the part of the other sex, from a considerate respect to the real rights of women, nor yet from a tender though weak affection. Much of it has arisen from

their indifference, their indolence, their selfish attachment to unworthy pleasures, and their want of elevated feelings. The better part of mankind, however, must suffer through the vices and follies of the worse, for there is a freedom established in modern manners, which, though it gives women neither dignity nor happiness, nor shields them from secret oppression, can never more be recalled. The amiable, the tender, the gentle, may be wronged and oppressed almost as much as ever, but the daring and heartless can be as free as they please. Every emotion therefore connected with the word home, should lead men to favour the intellectual and moral improvement of the other sex, and assist in giving to their rights a more equitable and a better defined interpretation.

CHAPTER IV.

PRESENT CONDITION AND INFLUENCE OF WOMEN, CONSIDERED WITH REGARD TO THEIR FUR- THER IMPROVEMENT, AND ITS EFFECTS ON SOCIETY.

SECTION I.

Present Condition and Influence of Women.

THE condition of women is so superior now to what it was formerly, that, comparing it with the past, we are ready to declare they have attained all they should desire. There is, however, a wide separation between their social advantages and those of the other sex.

It is far from being as true of women as of men, that their own conduct is their best security for happiness. But when we consider how close the connexion is between power and right in the imaginations of mankind, and how sensitive is the jealousy of power, it is no small testimony to the progression of principle among men, that the defenceless should ever have emerged from their established depression, to such privileges as those now enjoyed by women. The events that led to the change have been slightly sketched in the preceding observations. That the change was the growth of circumstances, rather than design, does not make it the less true, that the privileges of women now rest upon principle. The

want, on the part of the other sex, of a consistent and well-regulated purpose, may account for the defects and the contradictions we still find in women's condition, but does not disprove the existence of a principle of justice as far as it goes, or that it has made remarkable progress. How indignant are men against the wrongs and injustice towards women which they discern and acknowledge to be such! If the tenacity of prejudice and passion, or the mere want of thought on the subject, have left unredressed some sufferings, as great as others that excite indignation, that would be no reason for ungratefully denying the benefits received.

From their present vantage-ground, every advance which corresponds with the natural powers and duties of women is very much in reach of their own efforts.

The formation of the minds of the other sex is for many years entirely in their hands, and never quite exempt from their influence. This, when women are enslaved or degraded, is a very slight advantage to them, though a great injury to the community. But in these countries, it is incalculably important; and combined with the control they have acquired over the habits of society, it might give extension and security to their own rights, and make them the ministers of many important benefits to the whole nation. Till ten or twelve years of age, the young are almost wholly directed by women; and it is scarcely necessary to advert to the deep, sometimes the indelible impressions received at that age. They are then sent to school, where the im-

perfect cultivation of the mind is too often accompanied by corruption of moral feeling. But the influence of the mother is not at an end here. If that influence have been exerted only through the medium of weak indulgence, capricious and frivolous restraints, combined with the example of dissipation and luxury, the selfish spirit and the premature vices which discredit so many of our great schools, will combine with the wilfulness and pettiness contracted at home. The forced activity and mental excitement the school may have given will be regularly counteracted every vacation by the self-indulgence and indifference to learning observed at home: and the languid resistance which the polish of external refinement opposes to the coarse vices of the school, may make the young man, as he approaches manhood, fly from the restraints of decorum, but will not make him lay its precepts to his heart.

On the other side, when a mother is really competent for her important office, the mischiefs of the school may be remedied, almost to a certainty. The little innocent being, whose affections have been kindled and fostered by habitual tenderness, guided by discretion, and who has learned to identify the ideas of virtue with his mother's image, on going to school, finds himself suddenly given over to a master whom he does not know, and companions whose wildness prevents all consideration for him. The newness of the scene makes him feel the deformity of their vices, and when he yields, like the rest, to the force of daily temptation, the wrong that he practises is still associated in his mind with the restraints of

school, the dulness of its duties, the roughness, want of affection, tyranny, and selfishness, he must endure from his companions. To the moment of his returning home, all his thoughts turn with ardent longing. For many years of his life he has no conception of any greater felicity, and it is the maxims he hears there that seize hold of his imagination, and endear themselves to his heart. Nor is this the character of his childhood alone. As he draws towards the season when his understanding and his passions are both unfolding, but the latter fastest, it is yet the eye whose reproach seems but the awfulness of virtue,—the voice that never addressed him without love,—the lips from which he never heard anything but truth, and the countenance, where nothing impure could ever be expressed or conceived, that sway his judgment, that animate his exertions, and do more to restrain him from the allurements of passion and example, than either his principles or his regard to reputation.

Even in those relations of life, where love is quite out of the question, there always enters some more peculiar attraction in the affections between persons of different sexes, than between those of the same. A brother does not love his brother exactly as he does his sister, nor is the affection of a son for his father quite the same feeling that he has for his mother. The idea that they need his protection gives his feelings for her and his sister a greater tenderness and delicacy, than the strongest attachments he can form to a person of his own sex. It is not even requisite that a man should regard his mother

as a woman of very superior endowments, to esteem her applause and her pride in his conduct, as the highest incitement to his exertions. But when he does look up with as much reverence to her judgment, as confidence in her rectitude and affection, if there be in the human breast a feeling that resembles idolatry, it is that which he feels for her.

The hardest trial the discretion of a mother can be put to is, when the conduct and character of the father of her children is such as cannot command their reverence, or even when, without vices that shock us, his inconsiderate fondness, or ill-regulated temper and judgment, throws upon her all the pain of enforcing restraint. These either shake the authority of her precepts, or defeat that consistency and regularity, which both strengthen the bonds of good discipline and alleviate their pressure. Every motive that can sway the heart and the conscience of a wife and mother, must restrain her from shaking that love and respect for their father, and that deference for his opinions, which are the first germs of her children's virtues, the holiest of nature's instincts, and the right to which, is the last that erring man can forfeit by his misconduct.

On the other side, it is a painful perplexity to risk confusing the moral feelings of her children, by instilling respect and obedience to one, whose example is at open variance with all they are taught to hold sacred; or to lessen her own influence by assenting to doctrines and practices as right, on the authority of the father, which she has denounced as improper on her own.

These evils must occur in the diversities of domestic life; but to a mother who deserves the first place in her children's esteem, they are not as bad as they appear. Parental affection is a very disinterested feeling, and there are a great many men who, seeing the prudence of their wife's management, will not seek to disturb it. Though too weak or too selfish to control their own defects, they will rather employ the weight of their authority to confirm the deference due to the mother's. When it is otherwise, she may yet feel assured, that whatever petty disturbance the father's example or indulgence may create during infancy, as her children grow up, it will be her precepts, her opinions, her tastes, her religion, and her politics, that will be inoculated into their hearts. They will be taught by her, that during youth, a parent is the viceroy of God upon earth to his children. They will learn to check, as a sort of impiety, the idea of examining and passing judgment on the conduct of their father, however ill adapted he may unhappily be to serve them for a model. But when seeking to form their own character and regulate their own actions, it will be to their mother's opinions they will turn, as to guiding lights through the shadows of their own inexperience. This is, however, the empire only of an enlarged and cultivated judgment, conjoined with the winning sweetness of a feminine temper, and the tenderness of maternal love. The foolish, the ignorant, the frivolous, will never possess it, not even over those who are as foolish and frivolous as themselves. But the mother, who understands what

is really meant by educating, who has endowed her children with habits of self-command, and with principles of action and of reasoning that will give them the power of progressive self-guidance, will for ever retain the veneration of her children. Instead of the conceit which bursts forth in unformed judgments when they attain some advance on the knowledge of their seniors, the children of such a parent will look back upon her as the true source of all the advantages they have gained by the progress of the age, and the possession of means which she had not.

SECTION II.

Present Condition and Influence of Women,— *(continued.)*

Society, as it is commonly called, that is, meetings for the purposes of amusement, or the cultivation of acquaintance, is an engine of much greater power than might be supposed from the apparent lightness of its object. It is the great means for giving vitality to opinions; and over society, in the above sense of the word, women have even greater influence than men. Opinions may be inculcated and diffused through the press, though they want life and motion till avowed amongst numbers; but when they are brought forward and professed in societies, that both gratify our ambition and promote our pleasures, they immediately begin to affect conduct and character. The hesitation of the modest, the fears of

the timid, the indifference of the lukewarm, and the calculations of the interested, are determined at once: the separate and secret convictions of each become open and practical. The influence of society over the pride and ambition of its members is never disputed; the most solid advantages are refused, if the opinion of society discredit the employments. What penury has been endured, what wealth has been slighted, because mercantile professions have been held derogatory! Even titles and rank are barren distinctions when society refuses to honour their draft on its applause; the epithet "Parvenu" overpowers the Earldom or Marquisate. Through some of the channels of society every one must pass, and be either chilled and disheartened by neglect, or encouraged, and to a great degree formed, by notice. Its spirit, whatever that be, is very hard to resist. There are none more subservient to it than those who from station and rank might be supposed able to lead, rather than follow; they who disapprove, only retire and avoid it as much as they can. Whoever desires to rise through its assistance, or indulge in its pleasures, must conform to its tone; and that tone which overawes the young, seduces the weak, and satisfies the unthinking, is almost entirely within the control of the female sex. They can give currency to any tastes and pursuits they please, and even to religious sentiments, to a degree that is almost baneful, from the rash and worldly temper with which that sacred subject is too often treated. "Their word, though absurd, must be law." It rests with them to keep vice in countenance or in

disgrace; and that without an ungentle or even a definite expression of censure. The slight which

Wounds with a touch that's scarcely felt or seen, is even more galling to the sufferer, from the very want of any offence he can complain of, and which could create a sympathy in his favour. No one was ever yet found who could withstand such an infliction from the general feeling of society.

The command of wealth possessed by women is considerable; and that, combined with the power they have of conferring social distinction, and directing the tastes and habits of society, would enable them to promote many beneficial projects, many arts, sciences, or institutions, in which they might take an interest. The same means give them control over various branches of trade; changes of fashion, depending chiefly upon them, cause fluctuations of employment, that are productive sometimes of wealth and sometimes of ruin.

Collectively, they might do much to remove the national stigma, of leaving men of science and letters neglected. But their education is seldom such, as enables them to know the great importance of science and literature to human improvement; and they are rarely brought up to regard it as any part of their duty to promote the interests of society. They would not, indeed, be able directly to reward men of talent by employment or honours, but they might make them acquainted with those who could; at all events, mere social distinction, the attention and approbation of our fellow-creatures, is in itself an advantage to men who seldom possess that passport

to English respect, wealth. Many times, their command of money would enable women to assist men of genius, to prosecute discoveries or inventions now lost to the country, or existing in an unfinished condition, only to mortify their authors with the glimpses of a triumph, withheld from them by want of means. Though learning is tacitly discouraged in women, yet the access to every species of knowledge requisite to direct their efforts wisely and well is as open to them as to men. With this power of forming the minds of the rising generation, this influence over the opinions, the morals, and the tastes of society, this direct power in promoting objects both of private benevolence and national importance,—with so many advantages, how is it that women are still exposed to so many sufferings from dependence, oppression, mortification, and contempt? why are their opinions yet sneered at? why is their influence rather deprecated than sought? Is it not, that they have never learnt even the selfish policy of connecting themselves with the spirit of moral and intellectual advancement? is it not because their liberty, their privileges, their power, have proceeded in many respects less from a spirit of justice in the other sex, or a sense of moral fitness, than from the love of pleasure and luxury, of which women are the best promoters? It is scarcely an exaggeration to say, that their influence over such important concerns as education and national manners, has been conceded to women, under an implied condition that they should keep their un-

derstanding as unfit for it as possible: generally speaking, men cast every discouragement they can on the increasing education of the other sex. In the highest and most influential stations of society, they have encouraged women to uphold a system of reckless and corrupting dissipation, accompanied by every folly that stops short of actual guilt. Hence the most useful tastes being positively and strenuously discouraged, and the reins given to the most dangerous weaknesses, their liberty has fallen very far short of giving them the rights and the security that it might; much in the same way, that the waste and plunder encouraged by the indolence of a spendthrift, produce such different effects from the distribution of a wisely benevolent man. The liberty, like the plunder, is used as recklessly as it was gained. What to one party seems not worth a thought or an effort to save, the other thinks may be fairly seized on for purposes of pleasure. In the mean time, every woman remains as liable as before to be made a victim to the temper of any particular man to whom she may be united. Every sober-minded man feels averse to a liberty that produces such effects as he sees in the great world, and becomes jealous of setting definite limits to his right of interfering with such indefinite vices as levity and the insatiable desire for pleasure. But that interference, which the just will never attempt except for a strong reason and a consistent purpose, the selfish, the ill-tempered, the unprincipled, will employ to gratify their own caprices, sanctioned by the

general, or at least the established, maxims. The liberty and the rights which the force of opinion compel him to leave to a dissipated or an alienated wife, as they gall his temper, so they provoke him to exert his authority in whatever other way he can, that will most gratify his morbid feelings. Thus it comes to pass that, with great power and influence in society, women may at the same time be martyrs at home: against this there can be no safeguard but carrying the force of opinion into the regulation of domestic life. This can be done by so raising the education and general conduct of the whole sex, that the injustice of the arbitrary power now granted to men will be made glaring, and opinion be unanimous against the exercise of it. It is not in the nature of things, that increased estimation for the whole sex should fail to influence the rights granted to each individually. Why is it that the same haughty-tempered man will address an Irish peasant with a tone of insult, and an English one with decent courtesy? For no reason but that he thinks the latter has a higher character, and that he finds it the custom to respect him. Every day it is becoming more impossible to withhold consideration from those who are rising in the moral scale; the more the female sex is upheld by general opinion, the harder it will be to wrong them. Whatever mode of conduct comes to be universally admitted to be right, infallibly becomes the general practice at last; were it not so, manners could never change. It is in morals as in science. The discoveries of genius in one age become the rudiments of instruc-

tion in another; and the self-denying temperance of a hero in one stage of society, in another, becomes the undistinguishing attribute of decorum. Surely, therefore, it will not be considered impossible to shake prejudices that have no foundation in reason, and to introduce a practical check to modes of conduct, which, when stated without any disguise, the most selfish man would be ashamed to defend. Who would shape out even to his own mind, that he was about to pledge himself openly, by all he could appeal to most sacred, to a fidelity he never intended to observe? that he held it allowable, to draw a young creature into marriage by her hopes of affection and happiness, and rob her of both for the rest of her days by his ill temper and falsehood? and that because law could not specify, how much of her own free agency she ought to resign, his caprice might be the regulator? Would he not shrink from so unvarnished a statement, and, by some vague generalities about reason and duties on both sides, evade setting limits to his own authority; leaving to others to infer he never expected obedience except when he was right, and to himself, a dispensation from the task of examining when he was wrong?

The most flagrant violations of his marriage vows, are what the hardened man of the world scruples not to justify. A vow, he says, must be held binding only as it is understood; and that women know very well, this was not meant to be kept: that they take their lot with their eyes open, and are knowing enough to take care of themselves.

They marry, he says, for station, for money, for rank, and having got what they wanted, have no right to complain; that it is their pride, not their affection, that suffers by the libertinism of their husband; that their hearts are absorbed by the great world, and most, by the most frivolous things it contains; that they are incapable of real love; that they would rather have a train of coxcombs to visit their box at the opera, than be mistress of the single heart of the noblest being who ever shed over home, the light of that love which makes the rest of the world look pale. He avers that they turn with disgust from everything serious; or if somewhat less dissipated and cold-hearted, that they are as whining and teasing, as unreasonable and silly as a spoiled child; that a man who, to escape from the prospects a marriage with such women holds out, should indulge a fit of romance, and choose a wife from a different sphere, far removed from the follies of the great world, might find he had only sacrificed graceful follies for homely ones, and that he was bound to a companion little better than a nursery maid. It would not be in human nature, he declares, for a man to resign his whole thoughts and affections to creatures, towards whom it is scarcely possible to conceive the existence of a serious and sacred obligation.

The truth of these pleas against women with contracted minds and vulgar tastes, or against the corrupted victims of the great world, is not easily refuted. But it is not the natural character of women. Who feels more deeply and indignantly

than women, when they behold such a treasure as the heart of a high-principled generous man, "the pearl of high price," wasted on a being who knows not its value? The fine world may be left to itself, for there is no law under which affection and fidelity, esteem and consideration, can be due to folly and vice; nor will any efforts revive justice and generosity in the hearts of men debased by selfishness and libertinism. But the fine world is not the British nation, and the contagion may be prevented from spreading.

There has seldom been any reproach less just, than that the influence of women enfeebles and corrupts the character of men. If restricted to women who are themselves corrupted, it would indeed be a very captious disputant who should controvert the assertion. But understood of female influence in general, it is true neither individually nor collectively. Though it might be apprehended that the influence of the weak and dependent, would be rather to foster frivolity and the love of pleasure than otherwise, yet the natural love which women, not corrupted by artificial customs, feel for boldness and spirit in men, counteracts that effect. In countries where women were free and not degraded, their influence was never held adverse to courage and greatness of mind, but quite the reverse. Neither in those countries where public virtue decayed, is there any reason to attribute that effect more to the women than the men, for both yielded alike to the influence of new circumstances. Countries where women are cast totally out of society and deprived

of all social importance, as in Turkey and China, are not conspicuous for greater dignity of character, or severity of taste than others.

But the remark might be retorted with much greater justice. It has been the influence of men, that has most impeded the natural tendency to moral and intellectual improvement, which free institutions give to those who are at all within reach of knowledge. When free institutions are introduced, they have not only to contend with the existing national prejudices and false judgments, which are the growth of the old corrupt or rude system, but they receive violent opposition and insidious counteraction, from all whose sinister interests are threatened by the direct or indirect influence of a better policy. But as prejudices and false opinions are held as much by men as by women; and as men (the great actors in society) have greater power in giving effect to them, both by their individual and collective authority, and by their occupation of the old and faulty institutions still remaining*, it can hardly be disputed, that most of the impediments to moral and intellectual improvement, to just and patriotic public opinion, to the establishment and sanctification of free institutions, have proceeded from the passions and perversity of men themselves.

All the progress in good education made hitherto by women, has been made by their own efforts in

* It rarely happens that any reformation is complete and symmetrical, erring generally both by defect and excess, and often creating antagonist strivings rather than harmonious action.

spite of great opposition from the other sex; but their follies and licentiousness have gained ground from encouragement. We find individuals who approve and promote the cultivation of the female understanding; but more commonly, men discredit it as much as they can. Individually, they are anxious enough to repress the vices which disturb the order of their own families, but in society, they give them every species of countenance and support. If it were only the young and thoughtless who acted in this manner, we should allow that it was natural enough, to find them preferring society where decorum is not very strict, and gaiety the principal object, to that where there is more restraint and less excitement. But the observation applies rather more to the middle aged than to the young. A woman who gives the reins to dissipation and folly, who is treading continually on the verge of indecorum, so she be, "But just not ugly, and but just not mad," becomes an object of admiration and delight to all the men; her society is eagerly and even humbly courted by them; they vie with each other for her notice, and she easily becomes the leader of a numerous, often a distinguished circle. Women far her superiors, even in showy as well as solid accomplishments, remain unattended to in the background. Beauty, wit, and taste, clogged with diffidence and delicacy, have no chance against such a competitor. They may be known and admired by a few intimate friends, but in general society they are comparatively disregarded. It may be suggested perhaps that to them this is no evil, which may be true, but the

observation is made, only to show into what scale men throw the weight of their influence. Whatever resistance is still opposed, in the upper classes of society, to the strides of corruption, is made chiefly by the women. It is owing to them that the distinctions between vice and virtue are not entirely levelled; and so far from being seconded, there is usually a disposition in the other sex, to attribute their conduct to envy or some other contemptible motive. The conviction of women while they live and move in the great world, is indeed both general and just, that the way to please and be reckoned agreeable by their male acquaintance, is to cast off every appearance of serious reflection, and to be as frivolous as possible. Accordingly, nothing is more common than for women to affect this trifling character, when they have it not; and this depresses the tone of society. It banishes the introduction of every topic, the expression of every sentiment that tends to preserve the English character in its true dignity.

There is an observation upon the taste and understanding of women, which I believe will be generally found true, whether in the fine world or the homely world. It is, that rational conversation, addressed by men to *young* women, invariably interests them, unless their understandings are really below the average. They always reckon the man who broaches such subjects to them, particularly agreeable. On the contrary, middle-aged women, unless their minds and education are a good deal above the common standard, usually receive such subjects with ennui and impatience; or else they

take hold of the bearing they may have upon some interest of their own, and discuss the question with spleen and ignorance. The reason of this is, that the young have not had time for their minds to become rigidly contracted. It does not require superior abilities to take interest in rational subjects, but only nature. It is natural to take interest in concerns that affect human prosperity, to wonder at and admire the construction of the physical world, and to be delighted with the sublimity of poetry and eloquence. But after a certain number of years spent in the frivolities of the great world, or the narrow circle of ideas and interests, which confines the views of women in many other stations, the mind which has not more than common vigour, becomes utterly rigid. In the streets or at public meetings, we may notice how often the countenances of middle-aged women express, as clearly as words could do, the utter insignificance of their ideas. This is the state of mind, which the prejudice of men against female education tends to preserve; and from understandings, thus purposely enfeebled, their own characters must derive their first nutriment.

Polished life throws out few less pleasing varieties than an ignorant frivolous Englishman. When the disposition of the English, to lofty and somewhat stern morality, to deep enthusiastic affections, to serious investigations and ardour of imagination, is stifled, their character has not the grace of a Frenchman's. The Englishman labours in vain to be a refined and agreeable trifler: he becomes a solemn vapid coxcomb or a heavy sensualist.

In thus urging the influence women might exert over this state of manners, it is not proposed to them to force conversation out of its natural channel, or deliver maxims. Ostentatious efforts could do nothing in a case of this nature. The half-informed zeal of new converts, with their ill-timed endeavours, and crude conceptions of what they are trying to promote, is always a serious injury to every reform in its commencement. A new system must contain in itself great force of truth, to withstand the shock of such injudicious advocacy. The real way to improve the manners of society is to eradicate the errors that corrupt them. Let women be convinced they have a social duty to perform in this respect, and model their own education so as to fit themselves for it, and a higher and better cast of general sentiment will be the certain consequence. If the spring be pure and copious, the waters which flow from it will make channels for themselves, and much better ones than if laboured by art. It is in this unstudied manner, at present, that women direct their influence to uphold the virtue and delicacy of their own sex. It is by the unpremeditated promptings of a genuine feeling, that they maintain the respect due to themselves and to society, not by set declarations or refined disquisitions on the subject.

SECTION III.

On Social and Domestic Improvement.

Though the object of this work, is rather to prove the importance of female education to national manners and happiness, than to the private and domestic relations of that sex, yet the two are really inseparable. Society can but consist of all its parts; and in proving that the benefits of civilization, will never be effectually spread through the whole community till women are much better qualified to promote it, I shall be very unfortunate if I do not show at the same time, that the interests of a more enlarged utility, necessarily must improve the virtues and happiness of private life.

It is so natural and so right that the two sexes should refer to the opinions of each other, (independently even of the direct interest the weaker has in so doing,) that if there were not a certainty of support from the best and most thinking among men, there would be little hope of success in addressing the women. In urging them, therefore, to disregard the sneers and the prejudices they may have to contend with, may we not ask them whether, as reasonable beings, and as Christians, they are justified in postponing their own improvement and their means of extensive and real utility, to the vanity of being popular with the weaker part of the other sex, however numerous? And whether, when they have turned away from all that most dignifies human nature, they find that majority so particularly lenient

to the effects of the ignorance they patronize,—to its frivolity, its levity, its extravagance, its indiscretion, its intemperate pursuit of pleasure, or even its innocent mistakes, and its conscientious but obstinate prejudices? Is it not notorious, that whatever encouragement men give in society to the follies of women, it is always on them that they throw both the blame and the punishment at last?

If anything were wanting, to confirm the practicability of reforming the false views that withhold the female world from improvement, it might be found in the experience of women in the present day, who have braved the prejudices that opposed their progress. They have found them as illusory as the sounds from the magic wood in Tasso, which, addressed to the hearts of the tender and the fears of the irresolute, deterred all but him who dared to question their reality. In contemplating the atmosphere of true enjoyment in which such women live, the respect which continually surrounds them, the devoted affections they have excited, the under current of sincere admiration for them which pervades the manner of their male friends, we are tempted to question the reality of the prejudices we are now combating. Returning to general society, however, soon revives the impression.

Not unfrequently, the same man is found strong in his prejudice against any acquirements of a serious and solid nature for women in general, yet an enthusiastic admirer of some particular woman of distinguished abilities, whom he holds up as an exception to all rules. A sort of thing made like an *aërolite*,

God knows how or where, but not to be compounded in our own crucibles, by putting together such well known ingredients as good wits and good books. Clever women are perhaps collectively under-rated, and individually over-rated, by the other sex. The reason that women, who are already distinguished for talent, produce so little effect on the taste and manners of their own sex is, that not being disposed to become apostles of a new system, they usually make themselves cyphers in general society. Accustomed to the flow, animation, and variety of conversation in their own circle, they feel stupified by the insipidity of what is commonly called small talk, and keep it up worse than women who have much less vivacity, but who take interest in the nothings it consists of. When drawn into the great world, either by station or the natural desires of youth, they soon become sated, and withdraw from a region where they feel their heart and imagination withering within them. If forced to continue in it, in the course of time they are absorbed by the current, for no one can long resist the influence that surrounds them on every side, and mingles with everything they do. But if, in some singular instance, their innate taste should be so strong as to be unconquerable, far from trying to take any lead, they will be too happy to escape obloquy, by following the tone that others set; nor will they do otherwise till the opinion that that tone is a right one becomes generally shaken. Till then, the wise will yield precedence to the frivolous and the prejudiced. These may be the most numerous part of society,

but they are not for that reason the best entitled to lead. The rule of the democracy, in the dominions of sense at least, is not desirable. After all, it may be safely affirmed that their numbers are exaggerated.

Sometimes the sneer against female learning is directed less against the reality, than the affectation of it, or the presumption that attends at its threshold. Those defects are fast disappearing, and it is a mistake to attribute them peculiarly to women. Is there no pretension, no arrogance among men? We see a dictatorial and political position, sometimes assumed by individuals of both sexes who have acquired reputation as lively writers, but who are totally unaware, that in the great world of letters their place is only third or fourth rate; and that their opinion is absolutely without weight as an authority. This pretension is assuredly more ridiculous in a woman than a man; but it is also less common; and every degree of cultivation their judgment receives will diminish it further.

The results of real instruction, its refined and various tastes, its extended sympathies, its clear judgment, its aptitude to render assistance under every circumstance, no man can dislike, who is not himself deficient in sense or feeling. What happiness can a man of enlarged views and warm imagination find with a narrow-minded creature, not capable of comprehending even the value of the things that occupy him? The capacity of following out abstruse investigations he may not require; it is one which operates most in solitude, and compara-

tively is not often called forth in conversation. But when the simple and beautiful results, unfolded by the labours of science, cannot be even appreciated by her with whom he is to spend his days; when the surprising powers of nature, that stir his soul like visits to another planet, are received by her with stupid ennui, or the contempt of ignorance; when he finds her cold and insensible to the progress of truths that touch the interests of all mankind, and as brisk as a ferret about some gossip that he listens to with sore and contemptuous irritation, there may perhaps remain a feeling of compassionate protection, which the bond of children may ripen into something of tenderness and consideration; but strong affection, the Creator's pledge of immortality, will never be called forth at all.

The happiness which married life is capable of producing is in truth too great, to expect to find it often unalloyed. As in nature there is a touch of beauty neither painting nor sculpture can express, so also there is a real love, beside which all the love in poetry and romance seems frigid. The young are warned not to take the romantic passions of the novelist, as a description of what they are to expect in real life. Alas! that there should be many, who find those imperfect descriptions so much brighter than what they have ever known of man's affection! The sudden violence of passion, its dangers and its crimes, the frenzies of jealousy, the despair of disappointment and desertion, may perhaps be painted with the force of nature. But who could—who at least ever did—describe the love that carries such

evidence of its intensity in every look, in every arrangement of daily life, in every speculation which fancy or hope indulges, that all possibility of jealousy, apprehension or doubt, is completely destroyed? Before the enthusiasm of such affection all the flattery of other lips seems cold and lifeless. Petrarch alone has given voice and expression to its deep and fervent emotions, and few are they, of his numerous readers, who even understand his sentiments. But even his adoration was for youth, and grace, and beauty. Who has ever painted that love, which fondly sees the grace of youth and beauty, when both have been gone for years—that love which is never impaired by the common infirmities of our weak nature, the wayward humours of unsteady health, or the temporary languor that checks our better purposes; and which carries the animation of its early spring, through all the varied forms of tenderness and care, that life requires in its passage from youth to age? If anything can raise our feeble nature to a semblance of virtue, it is such an affection as this, where the idea of a dissevered interest cannot exist, and where mutual tastes stimulate the interest of generous pursuits, and give variety to daily conversation. The seductions of ambition or pleasure lose all their danger, when there is a being at home whose love and admiration shed a radiance over every course of life. And never yet did hearts, so united, shrink from any sacrifice that could win the other's praise.

Seldom indeed are such pictures realized; yet they exist, and might be oftener than they are. But we

are such erring creatures, that it is better not to expect too much ; and as the unseen shafts that are to level our happiness in the dust, are ever flying in the air, it is perhaps better on the whole that the feelings of the many should not be too highly strung.

When we contemplate this existence—the strong affections that so often spring up only for “th’ abhorred shears,” and the little we know or can do, compared with our unbounded and searching desires, we are inclined to conjecture that the purpose of this life, was rather, through errors and miseries, to generate a greater capacity for virtue and happiness, than to gratify our longing desires in this present existence.

It is not necessary to perfect attachment that there should be an equality of understanding between the parties ; but let no man expect to find it with a trifler. There can be no doubt that there is an advantage in the diversity of abilities and tastes among mankind, especially in that between the sexes. It will not be denied that conscious superiority is a pleasure ; but when we consider how eagerly the eminent are courted, we may be sure there is also delight in looking up to and admiring others. Equality therefore is never essential to the growth of strong attachments. What prevents them is only such a degree of disparity as destroys sympathy. We are drawn together still more by our moral sentiments and feelings, than by the pursuits of our understandings ; but, as already observed, the consequence of leaving the mind uncultivated, is to prevent all sympathy with the pursuits and the sentiments of the enlightened.

The difference of mental power between the sexes is probably just sufficient to make them divide the duties of life beneficially. It may be a good reason for not exacting from women the same mental exertions as from men, but a very bad one for not fully cultivating the powers that they have. There has been a good deal of fanciful theory upon this subject. Sometimes it has been pretended, the whole difference between the minds of the two sexes was the consequence of education. At other times it has been contended that, though there was a natural difference, it was only dissimilarity; the male being just as deficient in some respects, as the female is in others; but that she ought not on that account to be held inferior. Rousseau maintained, that the mind of man was distinguished by the sole possession of genius, of which the mind of woman was absolutely destitute in every degree. Johnson thought there was a natural want of precision in woman's ideas. An eminent man, lately dead, tried the capacities of his daughters to ascertain the fact, and came to the conclusion, that the minds of both sexes were equal, except in respect to patience. Many other fanciful views might be enumerated, were it worth the trouble.

The simple truth seems to be, that every faculty in the minds of the two sexes is the same, except that there is less general vigour in those of women. There is no mental exercise in which men have excelled, that women have not also succeeded in extremely well, up to a certain point. But whenever the greatest efforts are required, whether of judgment,

imagination, attention, perseverance, or any other power, the superior vigour of the masculine mind becomes evident. Hence, as the greater part of the business of life does not require the utmost exertion, even of ordinary ability, it is only in the more arduous pursuits that the constitutional superiority of the masculine mind appears invariably. In low stages of civilisation, it occasionally happens that the advantage is observed to be on the side of the women; for any circumstance in their habits, that imposes upon them the necessity of greater exercise of observation and judgment, turns the balance in their favour. But in the complicated and laborious offices of civilized societies, no education would give general superiority, or even equality to the female sex: the demand for laborious investigations, and the highest powers of combination and invention, is too constant, both in professions and science.

A contrary opinion is occasionally maintained by ingenious women, who, from living in frivolous or contracted spheres, feel their superiority to the common-place men by whom they are surrounded, whose only advantage is the possession of an ordinary college education; sufficient capacity for which, or for a good deal more, they are conscious of possessing themselves. But they hold this opinion because they are not aware of the abstruse nature of the inquiries carried on in the scientific world; of the very objects and importance of which they are ignorant. Even in those works of general literature in which they may be well versed, they have not always depth enough to perceive and feel the great

difference between first-rate and second-rate orders of genius.

For the reasons explained, the inferiority of the female understanding would scarcely appear sensibly, in ordinary life, except for the defects in education. If the same pains were taken with women as with men, the difference between them would be very much reduced, till they came to be tried on subjects that require the highest exertions of mental ability.

SECTION IV.

On the Difference of Character between the Sexes, and the Duties that result from it to Women.

The division of duties which the difference of faculty leads to, produces in both sexes certain moral characteristics, peculiar to each, and which correspond with their natural dispositions. It cannot I think be denied, that there are by nature, moral differences of character between the sexes; nor that those differences are very much increased and modified by education, sometimes even over-ruled. Education in this sense signifies not mere tuition, but the bent we receive from the habits and pursuits of our station in the world.

But whatever the social influences under which women exist, it is everywhere observed of them that they are naturally more tender, compassionate, and gentle than men, and more disinterested; that they are more conscientious, more pious, more contented, and that their temperament is more gay and cheerful; that they have less ambition, are less courageous,

active, and enterprising than the other sex, and have less perseverance. But their comparative timidity is very much increased by education; and so far as it is owing to nature, it is balanced by the enthusiasm with which they take up any cause which comes to them with the aspect of virtue, or of service to the objects of their love. Accordingly they have gone as martyrs to the scaffold and the stake, for the cause of their religion or their country, with as much boldness as men. Indeed, there is no cause which has ever involved the interests of humanity, and in which it was possible for them to take a part, in which they have not been found to brave dangers and death, to endure sufferings and privations, or to sacrifice their own interests and fortunes, with a generosity the more remarkable, because it is unattended with the prospect of reward or celebrity.

With regard to the defects, which it is the fashion with satirists to reckon peculiarly feminine, let them who have been accustomed to education, declare whether it is not exactly as easy to inspire girls as boys with a scorn for trick and falsehood, and whether their minds do not kindle as easily with the love of the great and the generous. But the boy is instructed, from a very early period, to be bold and fearless, to assert and maintain his own opinions: the girl is taught to shrink from censure, and if she should attempt to think or feel for herself, it is probable, surprise and disapprobation will be immediately testified*. An importance is attached to

* The censure should not be directed against their having opinions, or daring to defend what they believe to be truth, but against the want of a gentle and deferential manner.

minutiæ of dress, deportment, and manner, which unavoidably engrosses all her attention, and is feebly counteracted on Sunday, by being assured that one thing only is needful, and everything else a trifle. The candid inquirer will not fail to discern that men, whenever they are diverted from useful and generous pursuits, become exactly as fond of dress and as great triflers as women; and that, wherever they dare not express an opinion or a thought different from the standard set by authority, cunning infallibly becomes one of their characteristics too.

Great mental capacity alone, will never raise either individuals or nations to greatness or happiness. It is not mere mental power, but the right application of it, that brings our species to perfection. We know how possible it is for men to possess powerful abilities and extensive knowledge, and yet live a curse to their own country and to themselves. But what then, it may be said, is become of the boasted alliance between knowledge and virtue? The alliance is indeed strong, but it is not because there is a necessary connexion between the bare knowledge of facts and moral emotions. It is because, moral sensibility being a part of our nature, we cannot dwell long upon any subject, nor investigate all its relations, without discerning in it some circumstances that touch our moral nature, and awaken a sentiment. No one is destitute of all moral feeling, but some people have very little by nature, or it may have been destroyed by the strength and indulgence of their passions; and in such case the most thorough knowledge of the facts that move others to admiration and love,

will have no effect upon them. It is not the philosopher's laborious analysis, nor the fulness of his demonstration of the times and motions of the heavenly bodies, that have a moral effect. It is the perception of order and contrivance, of beauty, and of infinity teeming with existence, which kindles within him feelings of admiration inherent in his nature. In like manner, when we study the sciences that relate to human life, it is not the logical proof, that certain means will produce certain results, that causes our emotions, but that sympathy with the good of mankind is implanted within us; and pictures of their good, laid strongly before us, move that affection. The cold and the sordid will not feel it, however perfectly they learn the science. The tendency of knowledge and study, therefore, certainly is to promote right feeling and conduct in general, by occupying the mind always about the true and the useful: but a tendency is not a certainty, for it may be overruled by opposing circumstances; and the mass of mankind are made selfish and stolid by their gross habits of life. The education of home, of school, or of the world, may have accustomed men to attend to nothing but what ministers to sensuality, to ambition, or gain. The motives, which are allowed to predominate daily in action, become habits of mind, and it is truly surprising how insensible we become to other impressions, though constantly presented to us. They whose moral sensibilities are low, and whose selfish propensities are not checked, may attend to nothing whatever in their studies, but the application they admit of to

some purpose of their own. That purpose, though a lawful one, may nevertheless leave them sordid and selfish; but if it be criminal, their acquired knowledge may make them only the greater foes to mankind.

Children, in whom sensibility to the good, and the great, and the beautiful, has been too little called forth, are sent to school, where they are compelled to learn, with great labour, things that are made dry and repulsive to them. The fear of punishment and the hope of reward are their only motives. It is therefore no wonder, that many people never look into books with a mind alive to anything, but the fame or the money their knowledge may bring them. I shall have occasion in another place, to treat at some length of the contrary extreme, of indulging emotion at the expense of those habits of industry and self-command, which are acquired only through labour, mental or bodily; but the object of the present observations is to show how possible it is, when the cultivation of the heart is neglected, for knowledge, ability, and industry, to be conjoined with great and disastrous vices. I would point out the pre-eminence of that moral capacity in man, without which nothing is good, nothing is great, nothing is really and strictly human. It is high moral sentiment only which ennobles and blesses society. This, if anything, constitutes the distinction of man: it is his soul, his essence, his perfection. His intellectual faculties are but his instruments: the very best owe their value to the direction given to them by this, their heaven-born master. His understanding in-

forms him of truths, and instructs him how to accomplish his purposes; but what if those purposes are wicked? what if merely trivial? what if the truths stir no emotion within him? He might unite in himself the several faculties, instincts, and affections that distinguish different animals, or even possess each and all in a higher degree, so that they lost not the special and limited direction, which is their nature. His vision might be keener than the hawk's; his sagacity greater than that of the elephant; his prudence might respect the wants of his whole life, as instinctively as that of the ant does those of one year, and yet still he might be but a more perfect brute. The step would still be impassable, from the individual and special perfections and affections of the animal, to the abstract and creative conceptions of the human kind. It is the love of the great, and the good, and the beautiful, detached from all personal, and even all individual interests, which makes him, in the true sense, a man, and establishes a sensible relation between himself, and somewhat more extended, more durable than the world*. Without it, we should care, like the brutes, only for what was

* These views are taken from the work of Aimé Martin, *Sur l'Education des Mères de Familles*. It is, however, divested of the theoretical doctrine, revived by him, of the distinct existence of a soul in man separate from his mind. I cannot pass this opportunity of stating, that I had finished my work, (corrections excepted,) before I even knew of the above publication, or the popular and estimable work called *Woman's Mission*. Upon seeing the former, I was tempted to insert the above views. I have no other obligation to either of these valuable writers; but the remarkable coincidences of opinion between us on several points, seems to me to give some weight to the conclusions.

present and individual. There would be neither labours for posterity, nor progressive improvement; nor any science, except what related directly to provision for the body, and man would grovel on the earth, a low savage, unable to draw forth all the powers he possessed, and incapable of civilization. Everything heroic would desert his actions, everything poetic fly from his imagination.

In this his glorious pre-eminence, the perfect identity of nature and essence between the two sexes appears. Herein is woman the full and perfect equal of the man. To him are given the greater and stronger instruments, corporeal and intellectual, to carry out the purposes of this material existence, and elaborate the truths essential to the progress of the race. To her it is given to learn the results, with the very same moral emotions as himself; and the truths he has discovered, and the plans he has matured, it is her office to disseminate through society. She can be true to the faithless, affectionate to the ungrateful, laborious for the idle, disinterested in her devotion to every one that wants her assistance, and to every cause which carries on it the stamp of benevolence. There is no form of gentle unobtrusive virtue, or of heroic or generous daring, for which her sympathy is not alive. There is nothing exalted which she cannot feel. The virtues and purity of domestic life are the vestal fires which are still in her keeping. Fatal is it for the nation where they are allowed to expire! It is hers to develop the moral nature of the child, by its sympathy with her, for moral sentiments are inspired, not demonstrated: as she is

pleased, so is he; as she is moved or delighted, so is the infectious tenderness or admiration caught by the infant heart. By her his earliest sentiments may be associated with virtue, or with errors that pervert the noblest powers of his nature from their uses; and false admiration, false shame, and false piety shall baffle the labours of the legislator, and retard the progress of the people. As it is the results of science and knowledge, not the labours of their processes, that excite our moral sentiments, women's minds are exalted by discoveries they could not have made, and by theories and imagery they could not have combined; and whatever it is elevating to feel, or generally useful to know, they should be able to disseminate. How great then must be the loss if they be kept generally ignorant of all that man has discovered, or established, for the good of society? What if they do not even understand the use or applicability of the truths that are brought to light? What will happen if their fine moral nature be deliberately turned to trifles, and their enthusiasm suffered to waste itself in errors long since refuted? Will they not either be corrupted by the influx of follies, that ever must float on the surface of high refinement, or be a century behind their age in ideas, and contribute to retard it?

There can be no effectual substitute at the head of each family, for a woman properly educated for her station. The want of this is one of the most fertile sources of misery in our manufacturing districts. Girls brought up in the factories, know nothing that the mistress of a family should know,

and from the consequences on the happiness, health, and morals of the whole body, we may clearly learn how much the character of every class must be influenced by the education of the women.

It has been lamented that there are no professions for women ; and certainly if there were any by which women of family could earn their livelihood, it would in some cases be a great advantage. But, generally speaking, the profession of a woman consists in the duties of a wife or a mother ; from these she cannot be spared. Those relations begin at five-and-twenty or sooner, and either last through life, or exhaust the efficient part of it. To postpone the attention these duties require, to lucrative avocations, would sacrifice the happiness of the existing race, and the education and health of the rising one. In the mercantile and trading classes, where women are very often brought up to some form of business, either the employment must be of such a nature that it can be taken up and laid down as occasion requires, or else, when they have a family, they must give it up. The professions and trades which constitute the support of the family or the individual, to be filled with any effect, must be followed up systematically and regularly, and therefore, as the general rule, devolve upon the man. His domestic and private affairs must yield to his public and professional, and his leisure for the former is but little. With women it is just the reverse. Their share of social duties is the care of home ; whatever they can do in the way of industry, must depend on the time they can spare from their families, and is therefore liable to constant inter-

ruption and irregularity. A poor woman cannot even leave her cottage. In the classes who can afford to keep servants, though the confinement is not equally rigid, yet superintendence and vigilance can never be dispensed with. According to the size of families, and a great diversity of other circumstances in the condition of each, the duties of women increase or lessen; varying from extreme labour both of mind and body,—more even than life or health can withstand, to the very slightest restraints upon their own disposal of time. It follows upon the whole, that in all those conditions of life, there are women who have a great deal of leisure at intervals. It is broken, uncertain, and irregular; and therefore, though they cannot be said to have the command of it for professions which involve engagements and duties to the public, yet it is available for social and self-improvement to a very great degree. Properly employed it would be of inestimable value to society.

Whether owing to the inaptitude of women for intense and long continued thought, or their greater natural cheerfulness, it is certain that they bear the vexation of small cares and repeated interruptions much better than men. A man can ill bear the cares of a nursery or a household, where his fretfulness, and unfitness for managing the defects of children and maid servants, set everything wrong. If his attention have been broken into the fragments required for so many small objects, his spirits are worn out, as well as his temper, and he becomes incapable of fixing his mind on any subject requiring

deep thought. It is not so with women, or at least it is much less so. If not exhausted with absolute fatigue, they easily acquire the power of fixing their attention; and when the hour of leisure arrives, can direct it with full advantage, on subjects which enlarge and fortify the understanding, and counteract the influence of petty cares. At present, this leisure is lamentably wasted, and unhappily most so in the middle classes, where instruction would be most important. In the higher orders, notwithstanding the frivolity of a great many women, there is upon the whole much more instruction, and therefore less idleness, than in inferior ranks. In lower stations, women who have not very large families, and who are exempt from the necessity of working with their own hands, are usually too ignorant to educate their children themselves. The affairs of their little households are regulated in a very short time, and all the rest is spent in most corrupting idleness. As soon as the children are old enough, they are sent to some miserable school, and the mothers and elder girls spend their time in gossip, vanity, rivalries, and meddling with their neighbours' affairs. More heart-burnings and petty passions are generated in this manner than can well be imagined, and the train is laid for many a future career of fraud and speculation, and many a bankruptcy.

The only corrective to this extensive evil, is for the whole sex to be brought up with higher views of social duties, and to be given better instruction. Were this done, the many mischiefs that arise, not from depravity, not from strong passions, not from

violent and unusual temptations, but from mere idleness, ignorance, and error, would be greatly diminished; and a stream of useful and practical knowledge might be carried from the libraries of the instructed, and disseminated through every part of society. It is impossible to foresee how rapidly society would improve, if real pains were taken to spread through each class, the knowledge of the principles and inventions most useful to its condition.

The very word 'society,' or 'community,' implies that it is an egregious wrong, for people to act and live solely with reference to themselves or their own families. It is true that in modern well-governed countries, private individuals are not called on to live as much for the public, as in times when the general safety depended very much on patriotism becoming a passion, rather than a moral principle.

In our days, measures and projects which concern the common interest are properly left to the legislature, to be enforced as is best. Private individuals co-operate better in the general good, by each attending to his own interest, well understood, than by constantly meddling with public undertakings. But it does not follow from thence that they have a right to disregard the interests of their fellow citizens: they are as strongly bound as ever, to see that their own actions and mode of life be *consistent* with the general good. Everything which the real welfare of society requires, but which could not without tyranny be regulated by government, remains a claim on the conscience and honour of

individuals. "All the good that my knowledge could do, would be of very little consequence to society." This argument is an absolute palsy to the progress of improvement. It may be quite true, that the knowledge or ignorance of one person signifies little to a great and powerful nation. But by the same mode of reasoning, we might prove that many of the most clear and indisputable moral and religious practices were no duty to society either, whatever they might be to our own consciences. For even the virtue or vice of one individual might also signify little to the prosperity of the nation; but what would be the consequence if everybody, or if a great many applied this argument to their own conduct? General vice. Therefore there can be no doubt, that moral and religious conduct is a duty to *society* as well as to ourselves. Though our guilt might hurt it very little, and our goodness serve it very little, yet it is still a *social* duty as well as a private one, to avoid the guilt and practise the virtue, because the consequences of our conduct to society are to be estimated, not merely by the results of our own acts, but by what the results would be, if our conduct were the general practice. This argument applies as well to the acquisition of useful knowledge, and to the endeavour to mend the ills which pervade society, as to the more direct and sacred obligations of personal virtue. One person may be ignorant, one person may be supine; but if the majority are so, evils will accumulate till the nation decays and sinks to ruin.

We may divide society into those who are assist-

ing the progress of civilization, those who are driving it backwards towards barbarism, and those who, being inert and stationary, are an impediment to the efforts of others. We must choose to which of these classes we will belong, for to one or other it is evident we must belong. If we are vicious, or even ignorant and prejudiced, so that in our intercourse with society we foster old errors and resist the improvements of the age, we must rank with those who are either impeding the prosperity of the country, or forcing it back to barbarism. But if we think, speak, and act up to the moral lights of our time, assisting more or less to maintain or forward improvement, we have then a right to rank with the first, and number ourselves among the benefactors of mankind. Our positive influence may be greater or less, without either merit or fault of our own, but we have joined the right cause. Each soldier has a share in the honour of the victory.

This continual regard to the wants and interests of our fellow citizens, would be so far from converting life into a series of solemn labours, or checking that spirit of amusement and gaiety, which under some form should always be allowed to fill a part of our leisure, that there would perhaps be no effect from it more certain than that, by repressing sensuality, selfishness, and pride, and rousing imagination and energy, it would banish the dulness and restraint, the apathy and spleen, which too often chill and taint social intercourse.

I shall endeavour to show the real and national necessity for the more extended view of our duties

to society, which has been urged in this chapter. Some of the terrible evils that afflict the country shall be brought before the reader's attention, and compared with the sources of prosperity it possesses. The lamentable disproportion, that exists between its mighty means, and the application of them to the production of happiness, shall be used in proof of the necessity of spreading the knowledge already existing.

The importance of female co-operation, under the influence of a really judicious education, will, I hope, appear evident.

CHAPTER V.
ON THE DEFECTIVE CONDITIONS OF SOCIETY
WHICH ARE PECULIARLY SUBJECT TO
MORAL INFLUENCE.

SECTION I.

*On the Necessity of Morality and Knowledge to
Prosperity.*

It is nearly impossible to say anything upon a moral subject, which has not already been often repeated, assented to, perhaps applauded, and then neglected. Nevertheless, it is only through earnest repetition that truths at last win attention.

If any delusions are useful, it is those of hope. Were we always to keep calculating the failures of the zealous and the eloquent, either we should attempt nothing, or proceed so timidly, we should strengthen the indifference we dread. We should induce nobody to struggle against the prejudice and opposition of society, if by our own manner, we showed plainly we expected no such result. It would seem an extravagance to display energy, for which even the advocates of the cause were not prepared. Fortunately, it is impossible to engage deeply in any subject, without catching some degree of enthusiasm about it, which beguiles our thoughts from the probability of neglect. It by no means follows that every effort is ineffectual, the conse-

quences of which are not immediate and visible. The traces that disappear from our view may rise again in some distant form, like a rill that dips into the earth, and waters the roots of plants, whose seeds may spread over half the globe.

They, who shrink from exerting an influence which they estimate as that of one against thousands, should reflect that they may touch the breast of some one, whose example and authority has the weight that their own wants. In the great diffusion of books also, there is this advantage. If a work have gained any circulation, whoever is struck with any truth it may contain, has the certainty that many more minds, at the same time, are so too; and therefore the first who ventures to act on it, may reckon upon being sustained.

It is observed by a writer already referred to, "that as arts and refinement increase, patriotism has a tendency to decrease: because personal wants must increase *pari passu* with the means of gratifying them. Hence *time itself* is wanting to do anything purely for the advantage of the community.

"The necessity of giving all our time and effort to the maintenance of our own individual station puts an end to the knight-errantry of patriotism. We hear of no more public works undertaken at the expense of private individuals. We have no philosophers who open schools, to improve their fellow-citizens without any personal emolument. But this disadvantage might be much more than counterbalanced by the general dissemination of a principle of action, leading every one to act consistently with

the public good, though not solely for that purpose. To conduct such a stream through society, and direct it sanely, the women are indispensable*.”

By making consistency with public good a principle of action, is meant such a prevailing regard to the interests of society, that any practice which, if general, would be injurious, should be discredited by a common feeling of rectitude; that whatever regards the general welfare should have an interest in the bosom of every one, whether they can serve it actively or not; and that their efforts in the service of their fellow-creatures should be guided by an informed judgment, not the mere indulgence of a good-natured impulse. These demands do not seem very extravagant. They are little more than the constituents of a social and civilized being; yet the whole nation must be very differently educated, before such a spirit could be spread through society. Very few men are brought up in the belief they owe a debt to their fellow-citizens, or if they are, they confine it to political matters, in which the feeling is mingled up with personal ambition. Most people think they may live for themselves and their own immediate connexions, and indulge their own indolence, ignorance, and prejudice, to any extent they please, provided they observe towards others the negative rule of doing them no violence.

The following observations on the state of society, will, I hope, illustrate in some degree the necessity of taking larger and more generous views of our social duties, and prove how effective the co-opera-

* JACKSON'S *Letters from Barbary*.

tion of women might be, in the improvement of human condition. At present, that sex is more deficient in knowledge than in zeal or activity; for it cannot be generally reproached to Englishwomen that they are slow or reluctant, when aware that there is anything to be done. We are all too apt to make the legislature responsible for everything that is wrong. But the legislature itself emanates from the bosom of society. It will of necessity be infected with its spirit, and in a free country will never very long be much better or much worse than its source. Neither is it possible for any legislature to act effectively in matters, where no corresponding spirit exists in the community to co-operate with its intentions.

A despotism, indeed, may now and then among its many monsters, throw up a man superior to his age; and if no Ravallac cut him off, a long life may enable him, like Numa, to convert a fierce banditti into a peaceful and orderly community. But the numerous and fluctuating members that compose the legislature of a free state, are continually bringing into that body a fresh infusion of the general spirit. Perhaps one of the worst consequences of political heats is, that the interest of public measures forces the nation to confer honour and trust upon individuals, whom, except for their political utility, men of honour would have expelled from their intimacy. Few things tend more to deprave the moral sentiment of the nation. Respecting particular principles or measures, the opinions of the people may be right, and tending towards the

cause of justice and morals; and yet on all other points, indifference to moral rectitude may be gathering strength, through the example and influence of every party alike, that enjoys popular favour. And as far as it does so, the effects of the best institutions will be more or less counteracted.

Some great defect must exist in our habits, for there is a very unequal proportion between the means we possess and our progress in happiness.

When we talk of countries as highly civilized, we should speak more accurately if we said they contained many highly civilized persons. When we look into the working of our social institutions, it is surprising to see how slightly civilization has penetrated. There are very great numbers whose ideas are not more unfolded than those of savages. The spectacle of vice and misery they present is so appalling, that we find it frequently made a question whether both be not on the increase. There are strong proofs that such is not the case in reality; but on the contrary, that relatively to the augmented population, crime and suffering are diminished. It is however sufficiently lamentable, that with the greatest wealth, the best religion, the greatest acquaintance with the arts of government and civilization, and the freest means of circulating knowledge, the advance of improvement should still be so slow as to perplex the judgment. To be sensible of our progress, we must look back and compare the past and the present; and we then discover, not that we are well, but that others were worse. What are the characters of civilization?

Can we say, "Look round at the comfort and plenty of our rural population, and the cheerful contentedness of their well paid-labours—observe the orderly activity, the decorum of our towns, and the excellence of our schools?"

I would ask, is a general disposition to faction and turbulence—are combinations of one part of society against another—incendiary fires—a stupid resistance to every new improvement—are these characters of civilization, or of semi-barbarians? Is there not something almost preposterous in our piles of legislative enactments for ignorant people, whom we leave nearly destitute of proper instruction in the duties or interests of citizens? While this first step is wanting, in what are we so much more prudent, than that excellent lady, who set out to convert the rude natives of some South Sea Island? She poured out her eloquence against their unregenerate state, their cannibalism, their wars and idolatry; she told them of the remedy she brought, she beautifully unfolded the whole scheme of redemption—one touch only was wanting to kindle their zeal,—she spoke in English, and they understood not a word that she said.

To those who most dissent from the possibility of a retrograde movement in virtue and happiness, while knowledge and liberty are increasing, it may however be remarked, that a certain, by no means implies a steady and uniform, progression of moral with intellectual developement. That knowledge and freedom have a tendency to overcome everything adverse to human improvement, is true in the long

run. If we compare century with century, and the best civilization of one age with the best in a subsequent one, (in whatever country it may have fled to,) there will be no doubt of the fact. Nature takes care of the progress of her creatures, as she does of their species. But adverse causes produce petty or partial refluxes, and it may always be a question, whether some particular country have not touched the term of its greatness, or whether some of its ebbs may not last long enough to waste a generation.

On the other side, even among thinking persons, there are many to whom the connexion between knowledge and moral improvement is not apparent. The nature of the union between knowledge and virtue, and the reasons why it fails, were adverted to in the last chapter. In this place it is sufficient to observe, that though among numbers, there may be individual cases of great moral deficiency, united with great knowledge, yet, as the general rule, nature always supplies moral sensibility sufficient to be called forth by cultivation. And when we represent knowledge as one of the best means of moral improvement, we do not mean the knowledge of trifling facts, or insignificant adventures however sanctified by antiquity; nor a great acquaintance with fables; nor much learning in exploded opinions, and vain hypotheses. We mean the knowledge of things that are true, and which it is important to know, because of their applicability to our feelings or our conduct. Such are, first, all great and general truths, the contemplation of which in itself gives growth and

expansion to the soul, seeming to foster in this world, the germ of that nature which shall expand in another. Secondly, the truths of a more confined sort which relate to our social condition, and the particular business which it is our lot to follow. In this view, the fallacy of supposing the increase of knowledge to be unconnected with happiness and morals is apparent, whatever we may think of the progress of knowledge, compared with the misery and demoralization around.

SECTION II.

Disproportion between the Happiness of Society and its Means.

Our condition is full of striking inconsistencies. We have such wealth as no nation ever possessed before,—wealth that at one time could subsidize half Europe, and that fills our country with private fortunes, greater than the revenues of some sovereign princes in other lands,—wealth, that meets the eye in every direction, lavished upon caprices, because wants have failed. And yet, we are liable to perpetual recurrences of extensive and most appalling wretchedness. The moral certainty, that in many branches of our industry prosperity and depression alternate, produces no foresight, no caution. Penury and excess are quietly permitted to alternate too; and the deadly passions and habits generated by misery, are allowed to overflow on the blessings of plenty. In the periods of depression, we see the working classes borne down, with a degree of toil

that conquers the hardening effect of habit, and exhausts the vital powers; yet scarcely able to earn by it a scanty supply of meagre and unwholesome food. Prosperity comes, and what do we see? Riot and debauchery; leagues for iniquity or absurdity, in which the people are banded together against their employers, practising at the same time a jealous and malignant tyranny on each other. We leave them at the command of interested or frantic demagogues, who harangue and infuriate them as they please; but we seldom think of addressing them ourselves in the language of reason and truth, to try, whether by possibility eloquence and benevolence might find some clue to their hearts and understandings. And if no better system be attempted, the same evils will recur in future, with an increased population.

Arts and manufactures are pouring forth every convenience of life, with such profusion and cheapness, that it rather resembles a creative power than the proceeding of industry. Or if we covet the productions of foreign countries, such is the celerity and safety of transport, that the intervention of half the globe scarcely adds an assignable fraction to their price. Some idea, of the cheapness of production at home and of transport from abroad, may be formed from the fact, that even from India, where climate and constitution enable the Hindoos to work for wages that would starve the British, we can import cotton, work it up here into cloth, send it back, and there so undersell the native manufacturers that their market is almost destroyed. But this outpouring of implements, furniture, clothing, and other additions

to comfort and health, scarcely reaches the cold, damp, ill-constructed houses, where the poor live huddled together.

The means of abridging human labour appear to be carried to an unexampled degree of perfection. But by some fatality this blessing is to many a calamity. To some the severity of their labour is excessive, while others are thrown out of employment. And what is still more deplorable, children at an early age, that should be exempt from all labour, except what is required to invigorate the body, have been compelled to work twelve, and even fourteen or fifteen hours a day, for a pittance that barely feeds them! After every allowance for the exaggerations with which party spirit loaded this evil, still it is one at which humanity shudders; and notwithstanding the risks to the interests of the children themselves, with which every attempt at legislation on this difficult subject is attended, our efforts should never relax. It is a subject that requires the most dispassionate judgment, and the most persevering benevolence. It would be hard to name any other, in which an evil so great can be regulated or amended, with such difficulty by legislation, or over which, education and principle would have so much control. Education in the parents of the children would reform the depraved habits, that contribute to stifle natural affection, and it would awaken in the wealthy manufacturers, an abiding sense of their responsibility for the fate of the helpless and innocent beings, who are wholly in their power.

The fluctuations of employment, which of neces-

sity must occur in agriculture, and are always found to do so in manufactures, under the influence of foresight and frugality, might refresh the body and unfetter the mind; but as it is, they starve the one and degrade the other. When the wages, calculated on an average of the whole year through, are not unreasonably low, those alternations of labour and rest carry in themselves, a remedy to the bad effects of confined and laborious employments. The health that is shaken by confinement, might be renovated in the months of freedom; the mind might be informed, and the pleasures of domestic intercourse enjoyed. But the high wages of the busy season are spent in excess; the habits are brutalized, and the sufferings dreadful when employment is suspended for a time. When wages are altogether too low, it is an evil which does not come properly within the scope of these observations; but that misfortune is fearfully aggravated by causes that are remediable, if proper anxiety were felt on the subject.

The following picture of the manufacturing population is taken from a pamphlet on the subject, written by a person apparently well conversant with it. This was the state of the people some years ago, since which, a return of commercial activity produced a change, in some respects, for the better; but activity has again given place to a period of depression, and the wicked and frantic designs, disclosed in the recent disturbances, are a fearful evidence of the moral and physical condition of the people. Unless vigorous measures be taken to improve their moral character, the same evils will result again and again.

“It is wonderful,” says the writer, “how little curiosity has been excited respecting the moral and physical condition of so large a portion of our fellow-countrymen, and how lamentable and pernicious an ignorance prevails on these subjects, in almost every part of the kingdom. The effects of manufactures on the health and morals of those engaged in them, are scarcely known or thought of, even amongst those who live in the very heart of the districts where they abound, and have never, we believe, been publicly noticed except for the purposes of political declamation; for the sake of corroborating economical or commercial doctrines, or by some member of parliament, whose philanthropy has not been equalled by his knowledge of the fact, or his discernment of the cause.

“The benefits of manufactures are intrinsic and essential. * * The vice and misery attendant upon them are for the most part removable, by zealous and well-directed efforts.

“We will boldly appeal for the confirmation of our views, on the *present* unwholesomeness of large manufactories, to any one who has been long and intimately acquainted with the interior of these establishments, and who has seen the children enter them at ten or twelve years of age, with the beaming eye, the rosy cheek, and the elastic step of youth; and who has seen them gradually lose the gaiety and light-heartedness of early existence, and the colour and complexion of health, and the vivacity of intellect, and the insensibility to care, which are the natural characteristics of that tender age, under the

withering influence of laborious confinement, ill-oxygenated air, and unwholesome diet.

“First among these noxious causes, to which we shall give consideration, is the *diet* of the people. This is for the most part unwholesome and inadequate. The severity of their labour, and the confined atmosphere in which they work, demand an ample supply of solid and nourishing food. We should prescribe, as the diet likely to keep men in health under similar circumstances, a sufficiency of animal food, wheaten bread, and malt liquors, and as little liquid of other kinds as possible. Now let us see what their aliment actually consists of. Potatoes, butter, sometimes pastry, sometimes bread, often oat-cake, and *occasionally, though rarely*, a small sprinkling of bacon, or other meat, constitute their dinner six days out of seven. For breakfast and supper they take sometimes fruit pies, sometimes coffee, (or what they call such,) but far more generally tea, diluted till it is little more than warm water, and the materials of which never came from China. Under any circumstances we should deprecate the *too liberal* use of weak tea, as extremely debilitating to the stomach; but the practice is fatal to the constitution of all hard-working men. At first they make use of tea as a stimulant to relieve the internal languor and depression, which always accompanies an unhealthy and ill-regulated digestion; it affords a temporary relief at the expense of a subsequent reaction, which, in its turn, calls for another and a stronger stimulus; and it is generally the case that those among the work-people, who have been long habituated to the

use of tea as a frequent meal, are at length reduced to mix a large proportion of spirits in every cup they take. This pernicious practice prevails to an inconceivable extent among our manufacturing population, at every age, and in both sexes.

“Nor is it from any actual distress, that they have recourse to this unsatisfactory and noxious diet, but from bad management and bad habits. * * But on all these points they are sadly ignorant, and their domestic arrangements are for the most part totally devoid of economy. *A vast proportion of them have very good wages*, amply sufficient to supply them with a solid and substantial food, were they well laid out, instead of being squandered in vain luxuries or enervating excess*.”

The writer proceeds to describe the intolerable severity and continuity of the labour in the mills, and its baneful effects on the constitution of the people; the children being affected, first by the feeble frame transmitted to them by an unhealthy mother, and secondly by the unnatural labour they undergo. After enumerating several other causes of suffering, he comes to the state of morals in a dense manufacturing town—a picture which he says it is appalling to contemplate; which it baffles the power of statistical inquiries to estimate, and from which there proceeds a general grossness of feeling on the subject of virtue and reputation, which counteracts the influence of anything that can be hoped for from a Sunday sermon, or the instruction at their

* *Inquiry into the State of the Manufacturing Population*; said to be written by Rathbone Gregg, Esq.

schools. "When the workman returns at night, the sensorial power is worn out with intense fatigue; he has no energy left to exert in any useful object, or any domestic duty; he is fit only for sleep or for sensual indulgence—the only alternative his leisure knows; he has no moral elasticity to enable him to resist the seductions of appetite or sloth; no heart for regulating his household, superintending his family concerns, or enforcing economy in his domestic arrangements; no power or capability of exertion to rise above his circumstances or better his condition. He has no time to be wise, no leisure to be good; he is sunken, debilitated, depressed, unnerved for effort, incapable of virtue, unfit for everything but the regular, hopeless, desponding, degrading variety of laborious vegetation, or shameless intemperance*."

Such is the life of multitudes in the heart of the freest country in Europe, where knowledge has accumulated her greatest treasures, where the art of reducing labour to the least amount is best understood, and whose wealth and beneficence, in the apprehension of foreigners, were once convertible terms. Such are the necessities of the laborious, such the poverty of diet in a country, where agriculture is approaching daily towards perfection. Let me not be accused of unfairness, for presenting this powerful picture of manufacturing miseries, knowing that the subject has been taken up with the utmost energy by the legislature, and that the very im-

* *Inquiry into the State of the Manufacturing Population.*

portant amendments in respect to ventilation and cleanliness, and the regulation of infant labour have been effected. But if some improvements in construction and method have been introduced, never likely to be lost, it is not the less true, that the main roots of the worst evils still remain unaltered, or very little altered; namely, the low moral and mental condition of the body of the people; the scandalous deficiency of education, and the want in the higher classes, not of generous emotion when appealed to, but of a universally fixed moral principle against the supine toleration of such things. The writer above quoted declares, that many of the miseries he describes admit of remedy, even by individual exertion, and states from personal knowledge that the factories where those exertions have been made, "are without exception amongst the most flourishing in the trade."

Is it reasonable to suppose, that similar attention to the moral and physical condition of our fellow-creatures in other branches of industry, would be less profitable? And would not the general conviction, that moral and benevolent cares were also *profitable*, soon render them universal? The consequence of a considerable addition to the number of informed and right feeling members in society is, that the stupid, the indolent, or the unprincipled are forced to follow the example and bend to the opinions of the former. When changes in habits and manners take place, it is not because everybody becomes immediately (in strictness of speech) more virtuous. They only do so, who reflect on the

measures they adopt, and annex a right principle to them. But the rest follow the good as they did the bad, because it is the beaten track, where there is least obstruction to their indolence, and no jealous observer warns them off.

“As long as a man is suffered to remain upon the earth, we consider it an intimation from Providence that there is some duty for him to perform, which it would be mean or criminal to decline; and we are sure that no cause can be more worthy, no duty more imperious than that of labouring to promote the happiness of our countrymen*.” I am not going to weary the reader, by a detail of the miseries and vices of every separate department of industry in the country. The state of the poor in the manufacturing districts has been selected, as the most striking example among many that might be adverted to, of the things that are rising in judgment against us, while our hands are folded and our thoughts given to trifles.

There is scarcely a vegetable substance from which nutriment can be extracted by chemical means, or a country where the vigour of nature is called forth by the power of the sun, whose varied and nutritious productions do not overflow on our shores. There is nothing too costly to be brought from afar; there is hardly anything too coarse to be made palatable by domestic arts. But this plenty, this medicinal variety, is driven from the doors of the poor, partly by artificial arbitrary dearness, partly by their own acquired vices, partly by stupid ignorance of economical arts,

* *Inquiry into the State of the Manufacturing Population.*

and partly by that offspring of rudeness—dogged prejudice against anything new. This dearness of food, combined with want of skill and economy, causes wages, even when good, to be principally spent on mere subsistence; so that the cheapness of manufactures by no means benefits the working class as much as it ought. The sight of the luxuries and gaudy productions scattered everywhere before them, provokes their ill regulated minds, to waste anything they can wrest from their present necessities, on vanities and show, rather than on solid comforts, and to palliate the privations that ensue, by habitual intoxication. Formerly the enormous sum of seven or eight millions was annually raised, and four or five millions are still raised, for the sole purpose of relieving the distressed, independently of all public and private charities for special sufferings. Yet wherever we turn, we are pained by accumulations of destitute misery, and assailed by idle hardened impostors.

Until the productiveness of the world itself is exhausted, industry can always create abundance, and capital can always command industry. In England there is more of both than in any other country. Yet from some causes, perhaps not yet rightly understood, our feelings are continually pained by the spectacle of the able and willing who cannot get work. The mass of the people are so ignorant, that the peace of society is repeatedly endangered by associations, for purposes that would ruin the associates themselves. The multitude cannot be made learned—this is not their vocation. They must live

by the labour of their hands. But that degree of instruction which is essential to true civilization, which all should seek, to which all should aspire, is to have just ideas of those things which affect their own business and duties. False notions lead to false measures*.

The supply both of mental and moral information is quite without parallel in any former time. Every truth that can most influence the well-being of mankind, every invention or contrivance for counteracting the disadvantages of situation or employment, for facilitating every process, and making small means produce their greatest comfort, is immediately published. Useful instructions are brought down to the level of common capacities, in publications that may be read with delight for the grace of their composition. In some, the knowledge conveyed is rendered precise and accurate, so as to fit it for practice; but too few of the people are able to read fluently and with understanding; and too many are so degraded by poverty, as to be incapable of the concert which is often required for improvements, or of exerting that individual energy which is necessary for the least step out of accustomed routine. Few, of those who have not been tried, know the difficulty of making an exertion where hope is chilled. We have a large church establishment, and its numbers are probably equalled by sectarian teachers; we have colleges and schools, some of them very good; yet we find the connexion between religion and morality

* SAY'S *Cours Complet d'Economie Politique*. See vol. i. p. 205, first French edition, where this subject is more fully treated.

very slight in the minds of the many. And the inconsistency, is little perceived, between an almost superstitious scrupulousness about going to church, and living in the practice of gross and detestable vices, or the indulgence of malignant passions.

Do these evils proceed from some moral perversity in the people? Is there some natural barrier in England against the effects of capital, industry, science, and religion? Or, is it not that ignorance of the laws that regulate and harmonize social existence, and of those that govern the human mind, has hitherto been extensively prevalent, and is still resisting the remedies of riper experience?

Some people think that troubles spring out of the dust, and have no cause at all. Many mistake the source of their calamities for their greatest security; and few are they who regard it as a duty, to understand on what their own welfare, or that of society, depends. The extensive corruption, and the disastrous stupidity that prevail in so many directions, give a pretext to some persons, for treating of the whole body of the lower orders, as of animals incapable of understanding their own interest, or of submitting to law and order. This is a gross exaggeration. There is a great deal too much virtue and intelligence among the population, to entitle any one to regard them as unworthy of political and social respect. Let those persons, who hold such low opinions of the working classes, recollect how much virtue and resolution it requires to be upright and well conducted, against the example and influence of a corrupt majority, and how many instances we all

find (when we turn our attention to the poor) of industrious, sober, and kind-hearted men.

But the poor and ignorant cannot educate themselves: it must be the upper classes who give them the means of improvement. In the natural laws of society, the use of a class, who are independent of labour for subsistence, is that a certain part of the community should have leisure to acquire that general knowledge, which is the parent of wise institutions and pure morals. That they should have such affluence as to give weight to their example and authority is also desirable. Government, as has already been observed, cannot act effectively against a very great preponderance of error and prejudice; but must legislate in the spirit of truths that are generally known, and in the service of interests that excite general sympathy.

The object of this work is not to advocate particular measures, nor even to assume that everything that is wrong, is so through culpable neglect; but it is to call attention to the grievous evils, that neither legislation, nor zeal and charity can counteract with effect, till the increased education of all classes assists their efforts. Something must be wanting, when such unrivalled knowledge and wealth are accompanied by such various and wide-spread evils. It is not benevolence that is deficient, for nowhere can we turn without meeting it, in private, struggling against miseries too great for its power, and, in public, devoting abilities of the first order to the cause of humanity. It is the wider diffusion of knowledge we require: more heads and hands still

are wanted, qualified for acting in concert, or at least, acting generally on right principles. Too many persons, capable of generous feeling, are absorbed and corrupted by luxury and frivolity; too many waste their efforts from shallow, mistaken, and contradictory views.

The prosperity of the nation would be more advanced, by disseminating widely the more practical parts of the knowledge we possess, than by additions to our stock. What we need most, are thousands of small channels, from that flood of knowledge and science which spreads afar the glory of England.

SECTION III.

Advantages possessed by the higher orders.

When we come to consider the middle and upper classes of society in all their various gradations, we find inconsistencies there also, between the advantages they possess and their moral and mental advancement. The higher we go, the more strongly pronounced are the peculiar defects of each class. The boundaries of station are so indefinite in Great Britain, that we cannot discriminate the middle from the higher orders by any characters, that in some of their shades do not apply equally to both. Frivolity and luxury may have different dresses and attitudes in the first societies, from what they have in inferior ones, but the things are the same.

When we view the resources at the command of those who can choose their employments, we might expect the prevailing character of English society

would be that of refined and cultivated intelligence. As soon as the progress of wealth has released a considerable portion of society from the necessity of labour, the fine arts seem to spring up as a natural corrective to coarseness of taste and feeling. If exemption from labour do not bring refinement and mental activity, it is rather an evil. Pleasure is a necessary of life. The fine arts have the advantage of wakening our sensibility, stimulating mental activity, purifying our taste, and bringing beauty and cheerfulness to animate many of the melancholy and monotonous hours of life. The fine arts are the methods, by which our physical and animal sensations are converted into moral perceptions. They give independent and honourable employment to a class of the most highly gifted of our fellow-creatures. In their different varieties and degrees of utility and dignity, they are all valuable. The arts of poetry, painting, music, sculpture, ornamental architecture, gardening, with many of the productions of literature and imagination, supply an inexhaustible fund of recreation and enjoyment that have no counterbalancing pains.

But it is the science of our era that is its pride and its boast. Science that opens the golden gates of a new world of ideas, whose splendour inspires imagination with thoughts unknown before, and where our boldest conceptions of beauty and grandeur are amazed by the surpassing forms of real existence, stretching illimitably beyond each preceding discovery made by man.

Fresh and increasing excitements to curiosity

spring up from the profusion and variety of natural objects, each supporting a science complete in itself, and yet so linked, by all-pervading laws, with every other, as to be but a portion of one universal system.

Everything in the form of matter however coarse, the refuse and dross of more valuable materials, is resolvable by science into elements too subtle for our vision, and yet possessed of such potency, that they effect transmutations more surprising than the fables of magic. The points that spangle the still blue vault, and make night lovely to the untaught peasant, interpreted by science, expand into worlds and systems of worlds: some so remote, that even the characters of light, in which their existence is declared to us, can scarcely give full assurance of their reality,—some, kindred planets, which science has measured, and has told their movements, their seasons, and the length of their days. Such resemblances to our own globe are ascertained in their general laws, and such diversity in their peculiar ones, that we are led irresistibly to believe they all teem with beings, sentient and intelligent as we are, yet whose senses, and powers, and modes of existence, must be very dissimilar, and indefinitely varied. The regions of space, within the field of our vision, present us with phenomena the most incomprehensibly mysterious, and with knowledge the most accurate and demonstrable. Light, motion, form and magnitude, the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, have their several sciences, and each would exhaust a life to master it completely. No uneasy passion follows him who engages in such speculations,

where continual pursuit is made happy by the sense of continual progress. He leaves his cares at the threshold; for when his attention is fixed, so great is the pleasure of contemplation, that it seems good to have been born for this alone.

If we turn to the moral world where, strange as it seems, we meet with less clearness and grandeur, yet there our deep interest in its truths supplies a different, perhaps a more powerful attraction. While we wonder and hope, the general laws of sentient existence give us glimpses of their harmony with those of inanimate nature. The latter seems assuredly made for the use of the former. The identity of benevolence with wisdom presents itself to our minds as a necessary truth, and notwithstanding our perplexities, brings peace to our hearts. Social distinctions sink to insignificance when contemplating our place in existence: and the privilege of reading the book of nature and sharing the thoughts and the sentiments of the distinguished among men atones for obscurity and neglect; neither would the troubled power of a throne, nor the flushing of victory, repay us for the sacrifice of those pleasures.

To the sciences that spring from our social relations, the general laws of moral and physical nature, on which they must be founded, give some of their own greatness and harmony. Immediate and indispensable utility adds its peculiar interest. The mere necessities of animal subsistence, and the pressure of individual wants, which first call forth the intelligence and activity of the creature, are also the sources of the temptations that lure him

from the perfection of which he is capable. Our moral nature rises in our estimation, when it is dis-severed from those personal desires, and begins to delight in the good of mankind. Every speculation, that relates to the welfare of man, makes us experience, that it is impossible to learn and know what is good for him, without also desiring it. Jurisprudence and government would give no satisfaction, if they were the codes of a tyrant—full of confusion and oppression; social economy would awaken no interest, if it did nothing but teach how the few might prosper at the expense of the many. In contemplating general truths, partial affections are lost in the inherent love of the human mind for the true and the benevolent, and for a time at least, the mercenary becomes generous, and the selfish a philanthropist.

Proficiency in science must ever be the privilege of comparatively few. In the present advanced state of knowledge, those who can master the known, and extend its dominion, must be gifted by nature with more than common abilities, directed by strong inclination. To a certain degree also they must be independent of labour for support. Therefore, a wider extension of scientific acquirements might not do very much towards enlarging the boundaries of knowledge, but, of the moral and social effects of spreading such tastes, there can be no doubt. Naturally, men are by no means deficient in sensibility to the grandeur and importance of scientific and literary knowledge, or to the beauty and moral sentiment of the fine arts. In far the greater number tastes

of this nature can be awakened in youth. But there is a general aversion from the labour of thought, in all who have not had the faculties exercised while they were pliant, nor been supplied with a certain stock of elementary knowledge, essential alike to any subject of science that may be presented to their maturer years. By means of the press, many broken and ill-sustained rays pierce across the neglect or indifference of parents, to the minds of the young. Gleams of a rational spirit and enlarged feeling may often be found among the daughters of country gentlemen, whose sons are still solely devoted to sporting and party politics.

When we think of those mighty resources we have just been adverting to, the strength all such tastes acquire by sympathy, and the observation of nature and of human life they tend to excite, we might expect they would furnish society with everlasting sources of excitement and mutual interest, that they would create a universal sympathy with genius and ability wherever it was found, and soften the repulsive austerity, with which it is the nature of rank and wealth to look on humble fortunes.

Little or nothing of all this takes place. Frivolity and insipidity are the prevailing characters of conversation; and nowhere in Europe, perhaps, does difference of fortune or station produce more unsocial and illiberal separation. Very few of those, whom fortune has released from the necessity of following some laborious profession, are capable of passing their time agreeably without the assistance of company; not from a spirit of gaiety which calls

on society for indulgence,—not from any pleasure they take in conversation, where they are frequently languid and taciturn, but to rival each other in the luxury of the table, or, by a great variety of indescribable airs, to make others feel the pain of mortification. They meet as if “to fight the boundaries” of their rank and fashion, and the less definite and perceptible is the line which divides them, the more punctilious is their pride. It is a great mistake to suppose that this low-minded folly is peculiar to people of rank: it is an English disease. But the higher we go in society, the wider the circle of the excluded becomes, consequently, the greater the range of human beings cast forth from the pale of sympathy; and the more ignorant of human nature, and the more contracted do the judgment, experience, and feelings of its inmates become. The lofty walls, the iron spikes that surround our villas, and the notices everywhere affixed, “that trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law,” are meet emblems of the social spirit that connects the different orders of society in England. The effect of this is to produce narrow minds, or what is worse, narrow hearts on one side, and a host of dissocial, irritable passions on the other. In each step of the scale, those beneath see chiefly the unamiable qualities of their superiors.

Generally speaking, the several classes know scarcely anything of each other's feelings and ideas, consequently there is no common link between them, nothing mutual. This is a poison which has been ingeniously distilled from what has been

deemed, and justly, a great advantage to England, the many intermediate degrees of fortune between the highest and the lowest. The more numerous the gradations, however, the greater the number of natural enemies vying with each other, the one to outstrip, the other to overtake some rival in display. This common vanity, of seeking to equal superiors in station, spreads the taste for dissipation and extravagance through every class. To those who are struggling with poverty, it brings their own situation into frequent and galling contrast, with that of persons too near in station, and too familiarly known to them, to impose on their imaginations like princes and nobles, but who, with little to command respect, appear to them to exist only for pleasure and luxury. Often enough have the mutterings of this angry spirit sounded in the distance, and in momentary flashes given warning of its gathering strength; and if it have never yet broken out in that appalling form, a war of the poor against the rich, we may owe it much to that private and unobtrusive benevolence which, to the honour of our country, is found in every direction dividing and dissolving the union of the discontented, by exciting individual and personal gratitude, or respect and affection.

With regard to the ignorance and error which still hold their empire, it is not necessary to resort to the lower orders to seek for proofs. Ignorance of the most essential truths, incapacity of just reasoning, and superstitions as foolish, sometimes nearly as pernicious as those of heathens, are to be met with in every class. It is rather an unusual thing to

meet persons who are able at once, to see the difference between having a reason for an opinion, and having been long accustomed to it. It would be a very painful reflection, if all the misconduct we see proceeded from determined ill intention; a great deal is the mere consequence of false notions, the brood of ignorance. Many are the sorrows and sufferings, which proceed neither from incorrigible passions nor uncontrollable events, but from deficiency of that common sense and self-government, which well-directed education would impress on very ordinary natural capacities.

The foolish, impracticable, or mischievous resolutions we so frequently find adopted in public meetings of one sort or another, among the gentry or persons who class with the educated, are not always the effects of private interests, but of the great ignorance of the majority. What more common, than to hear people expressing their amazement at the absurd opinions or conduct of some of their friends or acquaintance, whose integrity, however, is quite unsuspected? We are apt to express surprise that persons, whom we have found agreeable, and even clever in conversation, when tried in business should betray the grossest incapacity. But a certain degree of ability can easily exist without the habit of just reasoning; and even the power of carrying on abstract reasoning, does not necessarily imply the power of applying general truths to particular cases, or at least the habit of doing so. This ignorance, this deficiency of mental exertion, is misleading people daily, though it do not happen to be exposed

in public, and is adding its portion to the mass of error, that upholds the dominion of misery and vice.

Thus it will continue, till a very large proportion of those, who are everywhere intermingled with the current interests and business of life, and whose influence over its purposes and pleasures never ceases, shall be so educated as to make that influence promote the vigour and healthiness of the national character. It must ever be, that the habits of thought and action which regulate daily life will depend more, for their extension, on oral means and on example, than on books alone. What must happen if half the members of society, taken from every class, be artificially enfeebled? Will there be no danger that the predominating and customary errors of weakness, superstition, and subserviency to power and rank, will be inoculated into every vein of society?

The writer of the *Letters from Barbary* says, that the good education of the women is the only safeguard he can imagine against the "self-indulgence, frivolity, and perpetual change of fashion, which follow in the train of high civilization. Women," he continues, "are more tractable, easier taught and moulded into habit, they possess from nature, or can sooner acquire, the most essential habit of controlling and regulating self-indulgence. They can more easily stop the source of the most destructive passions, and hence of the greatest evils of life; and when once raised to the influence and knowledge of which they are capable, they may teach us to do the same.

"On the management of indulgence," continues he, "depend our best habits and dispositions, the

enjoyment of everything, the duration of good taste, of life, of society itself*.”

This opinion may at first sight appear carried to extravagance; but the more carefully it is considered, the less we shall dissent from its general truth. The labour, the pursuits, or the practices which are forced upon us from necessity, take very little hold of our minds, except our free-will accompanies the necessity, which very often is far from being the case. “I would not change this mode of life if I could,” is not the most common feeling of our minds. But the pursuits we resort to, for relief from labour or restraint of some kind, meet us with feelings pliant and predisposed to their influence; they indicate our natural tastes and gather strength by indulgence. There is no occasion on which sympathy more heightens our sensibility, than when all meet together to relax from restraint and cast off our cares. It is then that the spirit of society spreads its infection, and if this be a bad one, a character destructive of our best interests may become general. Sensuality, levity, improvidence, selfishness, or some other character baneful to the prosperity of the country, may be acquired, and defects, not very heinous in an individual, may be disastrous when they become the characteristics of a nation. The simplest of all our indulgences, mere indolence, too soon loses its negative property; and if it pervade the body of the people, or the whole of the higher classes, it leads on from one consequence to another, till decay or revolution are the final result.

* JACKSON'S *Letters*,

SECTION IV.

Inefficacy of Generous Intentions without Knowledge.

The observations in the preceding sections are far from being meant to depreciate the benevolence, which is almost a universal virtue in English women. In all ranks their charity to the poor is indisputable. It would be worse than error to speak slightly of this virtue, without which one might fear that society, with its present elements of rancour, would scarcely cling together; a virtue the indispensable duty of Christians, and a feeling the sternest heathen would blush to disown.

Even here, however, in the stronghold of their virtue, the feeble unreasoning state in which the meagre education of women has left their minds, is strikingly shown.

A very few years since, evidence was brought forward, with every accompaniment that extensive investigation, laborious research, disinterested inquiry, honest intention, the highest authority, and the greatest publicity could supply, to prove, that the principal methods, by which national and individual benevolence had hitherto endeavoured to remedy poverty, had increased it, and created a great deal of vice besides. In such a case as this, the conduct of earnest and enlightened benevolence would have been in the first instance to ascertain, as accurately as possible, the claim of the evidence to credit. If it appeared so unexceptionable, that to doubt its general and substantial truth would really

invalidate human testimony on every subject whatever, the next step would have been to examine carefully the validity of the remedies proposed, whether by writers, or other persons, who assume to teach the public.

In doing this, inquirers would have arrived at some definite opinions, as to what charities were really proved, both by argument and evidence, to be injudicious, what were rashly and sweepingly condemned, and what others, though justly objected to on general principles, had yet created dependencies which they might consider too momentous to be destroyed by a sudden and violent change. In difficulties of this nature, had women been generally able to appreciate the value of right principles, their well-directed individual charity would have softened the rigour of rules, which, though judicious on the whole, fell as hardships on particular persons. This, by removing grounds of natural dissatisfaction, would have increased the efficacy of the severe though necessary remedy. Inquiry would have shown them that in general the persons who advocated and conducted those painful reforms, were more actuated by zeal in the cause of benevolence, than by the mere principle of doing effectively, a duty for which they received salaries. And that even if they carried some of their measures too far, they were so little wanting in mercy and charity, that they rather sought to redouble our acquaintance with the wants and the interests of the poor. Whether converts to particular remedies or not, persons of a judicious character, and earnest in the cause of humanity, would

have been anxious to learn, that they might check the ill consequences of indiscriminate charity.

What, on the contrary, was the conduct really pursued on that occasion, by many persons of both sexes? Was it not to vilify those who brought forward the evidence, though they did not take the trouble of reading it? Was it not to stigmatize the writers and promoters of the new system as hateful and wicked, though they never investigated their proceedings and arguments? Is it not true that designing and passionate men, since that time, have availed themselves of this morbid feeling, to add to the bitterness of a severe remedy, the cruel aggravation of representing it as a wrong designed to cause suffering? Have they not done this, knowing the law would not and ought not to be altered, and that their misrepresentations were grievously impeding its beneficial effects, and might lead to bloodshed? Is it not certain they could not have done this, if their wrongheaded or interested attempts had been met in every quarter of society, by persons of cultivated judgments, who had taken the trouble to acquaint themselves with the arguments on both sides. True benevolence should have led people to examine the principles of the new law, as they would have studied the nature of a new diet, that they might so direct their own private charity, as to moderate the evils incident at first to mere change, and so to give the experiment a fair trial. But goodness itself is sometimes connected with such shallow views of benevolence, that it is not unusual to find people, who take a sort of pride in refusing to

examine a measure, which their feelings have led them at first to think harsh. They expressly declare, they would rather not be convinced of a truth, which, they say, is to make them cruel to the poor. Are these the boasted effects of good feeling without knowledge? To make the kindest and gentlest of the human species refuse even to hear those, who profess to prevent an immense waste of benevolent exertion, and direct it into a more productive channel? The merits of the question are not here discussed. The point now under consideration, is that state of mind which cannot, or will not inquire for truth, though on subjects of daily action; and which, with attention powerfully called to its importance, will risk being momentarily wrong, without an emotion of conscience. It would be uncandid and absurd to class with the designing, every one who dissents from the wisdom of the measures alluded to, or doubts their practical benefit. But if those measures be wrong, there cannot be too many heads busied in examining their operation, or detecting the errors of their principle,—provided those heads be instructed ones.

Women who act in the mistaken manner above described do not deserve censure, since it is an established rule, that provided they do not do mischief with an express design, they may be as ignorant as they please, of everything that affects the general condition. But it is a deplorable state of public opinion. It is not suitable to a civilized nation, that its opinion should sanction total and gross ignorance in any class, on subjects which

may influence their conduct and actions towards others.

The great defect, in the common estimate of charity, is that the idea of it is too limited. It is too easily contented with ministering physical relief to the miserable at our gates. It should never be forgotten that however judiciously mere almsgiving is administered, its effects are but temporary, and therefore it ought never to be made a substitute for the greater purposes, that do permanent good. Well directed, it diminishes the distress actually existing, and has this peculiar advantage, that it tends to make the rich acquainted with the poor, and draw them together in the bonds of attachment: but it leaves society as it found it. The same causes existing, the same miseries will recur again and again. As therefore no contributions, or personal assistance, to purposes that promote the education or independence of the people, would justify our refusing compassion to the sick or the suffering, who cannot assist themselves, so neither should that common type of humanity, pity for the miserable whom we see, be made a substitute for purposes of greater utility.

The spirit of almsgiving existed in all ages that owned the name of Christian, and was never more bounteous than under the Roman Catholic dispensation, when it was supposed to purchase remission of sins, and when the gates of every religious house were the resort of want, sickness, and sorrow, for assistance. But what was the effect? Age after age new and increasing swarms of sufferers pressed on the

fervent hands of new distributors, who, (though with the zeal of apostles,) might rather be said to have prolonged life in its wretchedness than to have given relief: and from that time to this it has always been the same.

What, on the contrary, have been the effects of the progress of knowledge? It burst the bonds of a servile and paralysing superstition; it chained the struggling limbs of despotic power; and among the first-born of its immortal offspring were the Reformation and the English constitution.

Women have done a great deal in the establishment of schools, for teaching the rudiments of learning to the poor; these schools are very important, because without reading and writing nothing can be done. But there is too little of any corresponding effort in society, to strengthen and add to the feeble tincture of instruction the pupils acquire there. Like footsteps in the sand, the labour is great, the progress slight, and the impression is generally filled up and obliterated as soon as the foot is withdrawn. Some steps, however, remain. But too much is expected from merely learning to read, and repeat a catechism by rote, or answer Bible examinations, to which children seldom attach clear ideas. Many women, for want of being trained to observation and reflection, or ever having studied the subject of education, do not sufficiently perceive the difference between teaching to read and repeat, and to understand and apply. Our systems of education have very little effect in opening the understanding, and even less in affecting the feelings.

In examining children whose habits of life are not the same as our own, it requires careful observation to be convinced, how often the answers they give, and which to our apprehensions seem pertinent, convey to their minds no clear idea at all. It is not difficult to see why the deep theological subtleties, taught in catechisms for the young, lead peculiarly to these wise-seeming, no-meaning answers. And unhappily the sectarian spirit tends very much to bewilder and mislead that generous zeal, with which so many persons of both sexes take up the cause of education. This remark is very far from being intended to discredit the peculiar opinions of any sect. It applies not to the doctrines themselves, but to the notion that salvation depends on the right understanding of such difficult subjects. Each teacher comes like the Sphynx with her enigma, and the salvation of the little *Œdipus* is supposed to depend on his answer. Ably developed, I believe a view of the evils that pervade society for want of such education and knowledge, as are attainable by the most ordinary capacities, would be signally useful. No part of this work falls so far short of the feeling which dictates it; but I hope some good effect will be produced, from merely suggesting the comparison between the great means of social improvement we possess, and the use we make of them. It is evident that gross vices do not come within the scope of this essay. Opinion does not require to be aroused to their heinousness, otherwise it would have been easy to have continued the contrast drawn in the last section, and to have

commented on the pride and the meanness, the refinement and the profligacy existing in the great world. The present purpose is rather to exhibit the connexion between habits and manners *not held very criminal*, and consequences, that are justly regarded as fatal to national and individual character and happiness.

In the earnest conviction that many of those are peculiarly within the control of women, and others that are subject to their influence, I shall proceed, first, to examine the operation of luxury on the human character; and secondly, to direct attention to that great variety of condition and employments which the progress of society gives rise to. Each of these has its attendant evils, that in some cases increase to frightful misery; but they are controllable by knowledge and benevolence in the higher orders, and by the progress of education in the lower. By selecting from them some prominent instances to lay before the reader, I hope to exhibit very strongly the duty of that attention to the interests of society, which is advocated in this work.

N O T E S.

NOTE A, (p. 19.)

MANY people may think these views of human nature too favourable, and not to be granted without a very wide induction.

I have adopted them from the author referred to in the note*, because his research seems to have been considerable, and his conclusions borne out by travellers whose accounts have appeared since his work was published. His views seem to me in accordance with all that we see of the dependence of human character upon the circumstances in which it is placed.

Social affections are assuredly innate, as well as the seeds of angry and malevolent passions, and where external circumstances are such as to give very little provocation to the latter, it seems natural and probable that the first should predominate.

It is true that it is only where few ideas and few wants have been awakened, that we can suppose human beings without causes of discord and rivalry, but in the diversity of human conditions a few such occur.

* HUGH MURRAY.

NOTE B, (p. 52.)

I have been supplied with the following quotation from MILL'S *History of British India*, vol. i., p. 389, Note:—

“Mr. Richardson, who is one of the most nervous in assertion, and the most feeble in proof, of all the Oriental enthusiasts, maintains that the women enjoyed high consideration among the Arabians and Persians, nay, the very Tartars; so generally was civilization diffused in Asia. In proof, he tells us that the Arabian women had a right, by the laws, to the enjoyment of independent property by inheritance, by gift, by marriage settlement, or by any other mode of acquisition. The evidence he adduces of their rights is three Arabian words, which signify a marriage portion, paraphernalia in the disposal of the wife, a marriage settlement.—See RICHARDSON, pp. 198, 331, 479.

“But surely a language may possess three words of the signification he assigns, and yet the women of the people who use it be in a state of melancholy degradation. In the times of Homer, though a wife was actually purchased from the father, still the father gave with her a dower. *Il. lib. 9, v. 147, 148.* If the Tartars carry their women with them in their wars, and even consult them, ‘The North American tribes,’ says Mr. Millar, ‘are often accustomed to admit their women into their public councils, and even to allow them the privilege of being first called to give their opinion upon every subject of deliberation. Yet,’ as

he adds immediately after, 'there is no country in the world where the female sex are in general more neglected and despised.'—See *Distinction of Ranks*, ch. 1, s. 2. From insulated expressions, or facts, no general conclusion can safely be drawn."

Notwithstanding the doubts Mr. Mill (who is, I believe, one of the greatest authorities upon Oriental questions,) throws over the accuracy of Mr. Richardson, I still think, in the absence of more positive evidence against the fact, that it is probable the manners of the Arabians in their own country were not very dissimilar from those of the Spanish Arabians, where the consideration the women received appears confirmed by many circumstances. In the note, Mr. Mill seems scarcely to allow sufficient weight for the variety of manners that must prevail, to a certain extent, even in barbarous countries. The Tartars are held to have great diversity of character and habits among their various tribes. The same was true of the Arabians. Sir John Malcolm's evidence to the superior condition of the Eelyat women seems too authentic to be doubted. That the condition of women was, at least, as good among civilized Arabians as among the rude Eelyats, seems most probable. However, it must never be forgotten that even if we admitted, to the fullest extent, all that "Oriental enthusiasts" have written on the subject, the great fact remains of polygamy. Wherever that prevails, women are *property*, not citizens. Even among the Eelyats, who are not polygamists, (though their religion permits it,) the virtue, intelligence, and freedom of the women do not

prevent them from being still regarded as inferiors, and losing their privileges the moment it suits the inclinations of the other sex. Therefore, whatever the privileges of women may have been in those Eastern countries where they were best used, yet if we compare them with the rights of nature and the interests of society, we shall probably not hesitate to regard their condition still as a "melancholy degradation."

NOTE C, (p. 173.)

Let those who think this too strong, imagine a state of subordination, under which a man never could know to what concessions he was bound; and in which he never could rise from his depression, when he fell into the hands of a bad master.

A moment's reflection will show that the case of soldiers, servants, and others, whose engagements subject them to a good deal of indefinite and arbitrary control, is in reality very different. The restraints to which they engage to submit for payment, have no resemblance to those that are imposed on people by law, and without their choice. Men will endure many things freely, which they undertake for an equivalent, or for what they expect to find such; but which they will not submit to as arbitrary inflictions.

There is scarcely any condition a man can choose, in which the duties and obedience to which he pledges himself, are not limited as to amount, or as

to time. Servants are continually changing their situations, till they find one in which they consider themselves compensated for their sacrifices.

When soldiers enlisted for life, their condition was deemed so hard, that it was believed the army would be better supplied by altering those terms. A soldier knows that implicit obedience is indispensable to the interests of his profession; he cannot therefore regard it as a grievance, that such should be exacted as a general rule. If he fall into the hands of a severe and capricious officer, he regards it as a particular misfortune, not the vice of a bad system: he feels that it is one of the chances of life, which no regulations could entirely prevent.

It may possibly be objected, that a man who is driven by his necessities to accept a hard service of this nature cannot be considered a free man; but that is only a calamity, not a wrong. Freedom was never so understood as to imply exemption from natural difficulties. He has no *wrong* to complain of, who is compelled by his poverty to accept a condition of great restraint, which he owns is imposed for just purposes, indispensable to the good of society. If, on the contrary, the privations on one side, and the power on the other, be distributed chiefly out of favour to one party, and are therefore of no use to society, but quite the reverse, it is certain that though force or calamity may compel men to submit, their minds will never be reconciled to such a condition.

Now, with respect to women, the whole question

is, how far the privations imposed upon them are for the good of society. As far as they are so, it is the duty of every one to maintain them.

The necessity of a woman's condition is to need protection. To obtain this, she is bound in justice to yield up some natural rights. The point to examine is, whether the sacrifice has been made equitably.

Even the power possessed by the husband, of "seizing on the property of his wife, on the very fruits of her own industry, and of squandering it as he pleased on the most dissolute revellings or the vilest associates*," was not the worst circumstance which, till very lately, had oppressed the defenceless sex.

Posterity will probably look back with amazement, at a state of law which could have sanctioned so flagitious an outrage against the rights of nature and the rudest ideas of justice, as robbing a virtuous woman of her children. It was a power so revolting to every sentiment of humanity that, except for the sake of the children themselves, even the wife's criminality could barely have justified the exertion of it. The very sanction of social law is nature's law; and the strongest of all is a mother's love for her offspring. It is the most powerful image which poetry or passion can draw forth, to magnify the sanctity of a right, or the intensity of an affection. Even in the brutes, who exist for our sustenance, the violation of this feeling, though often quite unavoidable, is ever regarded by cultivated minds with unconquerable pain; and the same compunc-

* *Lord Brougham's Speech.*

tious emotion is the last which deserts the rough bosoms of those, to whose hands the coarse offices of society have fallen.

It is well known that the last virtue, which deserts the heart of a woman who has yielded to passion, is anxiety for the right training of her children. It may however be granted, that a woman whom this affection could not withhold from the paths of guilt, is not to be trusted with their education. What then shall we say of that principle, which gave to the husband the power of debarring the most innocent and deserving of mothers from access to her children, and giving the care of them to a profligate woman! Bitter indeed is the sense in which women might say, that law is no regarder of persons!

To work out the punishment even of guilt, through the instrumentality of outrage to the tenderest and most useful affections of nature, is at best a very barbarous policy. But for the legislature to secure the pre-eminence of one party, by leaving in their hands this instrument of torture, whereby to extort acquiescence from their victims, was surely unworthy of the English name. And so it was felt. To the honour of our country, the bill for amending this wrong was no sooner proposed than it passed the Commons with "unparalleled majorities." It was feebly opposed in the other house, by that class in society where, unhappily, the story of domestic life would I fear render men too often pardonable for being insensible to the cries of nature, and the authority of justice.

They who desire to see what was said on both sides will find it in the debates on the *Custody of Infants' Bill*, in the years 1838, 1839*. They will find the objections to it grounded chiefly, on the legal difficulties which would attend cases of separation, if the rights of the mother were acknowledged by law. But it is needless to observe on the futility of arguments, which propose to simplify legal arrangements, by throwing justice overboard. It is more agreeable, and more important, to call on women for the gratitude due to the eloquent and frank recognition of their rights, drawn forth from men of all parties.

The Lord Chancellor in a speech full of generous but dispassionate feeling disposed at once of all technical difficulties, by declaring the prior importance of justice to all other considerations.

Lord Lyndhurst, in moving the second reading, declares the law by which a father, actuated by the most corrupt motives, might take the children from their mother, to be "a cruel, an unnatural, a tyrannous, an unjust law." He gives several instances of men, who had availed themselves of this power, to extort property from their wives. And he says, he never heard a valid objection to the bill. Lord Wynford, in objecting to some of its provisions, admitted that the existing law ought to be altered.

Lord Denman's words are, that it is "imperatively necessary" some alteration should be made,

* See *Mirror of Parliament*, Monday, 30th July, 1838. Monday, 19th July, 1839. Debates in the Lords on the *Custody of Infants' Bill*.

“to prevent the frightful and revolting instances of cruelty and oppression that are so frequently taking place.” He assures their Lordships that there is not one of the judges, who is not ashamed of the state of the law which he is obliged to administer on this subject. “The present law,” he says, “is cruel to the wife, debasing to the character of the husband, and dangerous to the health and morals of the children.”

The first mover of this bill, Sergeant Talfourd, must have satisfaction in feeling that he has brought relief to some of the most agonizing human sufferings; that he has come forward to assist those who could do nothing for themselves, and whose gratitude can bring him no reward. This measure is designed to put some check to a barbarous wrong, and has first given effect to the growing, but still imperfectly recognised doctrine, that the rights of women are as sacred to justice as those of men, and ought to be regulated on no other principle. The moral influence of this concession cannot fail to be great.

NOTE D, (p. 175.)

Contempt for women is more shown in what is called high life than elsewhere.

When the plans for the construction of a new House of Commons were discussed, whether by the request of some ladies, or through spontaneous consideration, a gentleman was found generous enough to risk his reputation for sanity, by proposing that

some places might be reserved in it for ladies. This was formerly the case in Ireland, and is so at present in France. The proposal was received with derision.

The same thing would not have happened anywhere else. At public meetings, in other and less aristocratic assemblies, for the discussion of any question of a general nature, the presence of women is often requested, always courteously and respectfully received. There might be good reasons for not admitting them to the House of Commons. A greater proportion of women, both frivolous and influential, might have made their way there, than in other public assemblies, and have had some ill effects. But the request in itself contained nothing in the slightest degree improper or out of character; and therefore, though it might be inexpedient to grant it, it deserved neither insult nor derision. With the most blameless propriety, might the mothers, wives, and daughters of England, have preferred a request, that if it could be arranged without detriment to public business, some of them might occasionally have the opportunity of hearing the debates. They might have said, "We cannot imagine it unbefitting that secondary place we hold in society, and which we never desire to transgress, that we, who form the minds of the citizens and statesmen, till it is often too late to change the first bias, should be permitted to hear the discussion of matters which involve the interests of all. We deny that we can be surpassed in zeal for the true honour of our country, and we have never been

accused of indifference to the cause of humanity, when we understand where it lies. And if that frivolity with which we have been so justly taxed, and so unjustly reproached, be a fault, we know not in what school we are more likely to learn, that questions which implicate the lives and the fortunes, the morals and the liberty of millions, ought not to be warped by the petty interests of party, or the contemptible rivalries of fashionable life."

NOTE E, (p. 191.)

This is said to be the case in America. No man dares to do and to speak as he pleases, except he speak and do what pleases the majority. Tocqueville says, that as all laws are made by the majority, they cannot fail to be obeyed, they are the expression of its own will; but the consequence is that the majority can do what it pleases, and if it please to do wrong there is no control over it. Hence, he says, the majority draw a formidable barrier round the freedom of thought and speech; and character and manners are reduced to a tame uniformity, unfriendly both to moral and intellectual greatness*.

The law allows the freest exercise of every one's rights, but the majority says, "Keep your privileges; your person, your property, are safe from aggression, but think as I do, or I will render them all useless. You may remain among men, but you shall forfeit the rights of a fellow creature. You

* See DE TOCQUEVILLE *De la Democratie en Amerique*.

shall be shunned like a leper, and those who, convinced of your innocence, shall venture to seek you, shall be shunned too. Go in peace; I leave you life, but I will make it worse than death."

It signifies nothing, if wrong be endured, whether the power of the oppressor to inflict it, be from his strength, or his station, or his numbers. It is not the less wrong because perpetrated by many. Whoever is able to oppress another is the stronger for the time being, no matter what source his power proceeds from. The government which cannot control such power partakes so far of anarchy; and justice, which does not at least seek to supersede force, (whether from one or from many) is a contradiction in terms.

NOTE F, (p. 192.)

Bishop Sumner, in the work entitled *Records of Creation*, has the following excellent passages on the uses of natural inequality:—

"Perfect equality among mankind does not exist upon earth. The nearest approaches to it are amongst savages, who are in a very stupid and degraded condition; the equality is, in fact, one of the causes of the condition. For man is a creature of imitation, and while every one around him is exactly in the same circumstances as himself, there is nothing to rouse him from his contented torpor, nothing to suggest the possibility of those circumstances being different from what they are.

“But show him the example of something better than what he possesses, so it be but of a nature that he can estimate in his low condition, and you will soon awake his dormant emulation. It is true that the first things that will stimulate his desires will be personal ornaments, or some other trivial distinction, long before he will prefer the solid advantages of superior accommodation. The desire for that succeeds, but long before it can produce any effect, the first blow must be struck at equality, by recognising the right of property in land. The first man who encloses a piece of land, and says ‘This is mine,’ gives a new aspect to society; indolence gives way to activity, stupidity to intelligence. The desire of wealth and personal eminence is, in the first instance, the only stimulus to all those acquisitions of knowledge, and those services to society, which, once called forth, become such ennobling passions, and are pursued for their own sake, careless of reward, and in some cases careless even of contumely.

“The next check to the progression of improvement, is in those artificial institutions which limit the rewards, and consequently the hopes of industry. The worst of all these is the division of society into castes.

“Things are then only in a healthy state, when every avenue to personal advantage is open to every talent and every disposition. There is no instance in history of any people rising high in morals or intellect where equality has been the general condition. Every improvement that essentially raises the social condition of mankind, depends absolutely

upon inequality of condition and property; banish this, and barbarism must be the consequence.

“Let the condition of mankind be supposed perfectly equal; no matter at what point the equality were placed, whether all were rich, all indigent, or all in a happy mediocrity; indigence and barbarism would alike be the final result; for under any of the three suppositions, who would preserve all the mines, roads, canals, mills, of a country? and when all these were gone into decay, where would be the civilization? But these and their innumerable results being preserved, the very last class participates in the benefit. They have not wrought for the sake of others, but for their own; they have got such a share of the produce as gives them shelter, fuel, clothing, and protection, such as they could never have had in the torpid condition of a savage.

“If the mental condition of mankind were reduced, so would the moral. If the temptation to a few vices were removed by equality and its rudeness, the most ennobling virtues, and the most amiable dispositions, would never be drawn forth. But if the greatest virtues are lost in the barbarian condition of equality, the greatest vices still find room to break out, and with much greater violence. A dispute for the possession of a nut or a skin, in the savage condition, leads to sanguinary violence; in the civilized, rivalry for office may indeed create private rancour, but it enriches the state with two useful active citizens.”

Since inequality of condition then is natural and useful, the aim of human institutions should be to

give free play to the natural diversities in ability and industry among mankind; to control and direct them to such purposes as will draw forth the advantages of the natural law; but at the same time to restrain the excesses to which every principle will lead, if entirely uncontrolled by human efforts. Nothing does this so well as impartial justice, which leaves to every one his natural advantages, and therefore must assign to the abler and stronger sex a more influential position.

NOTE G, (p. 199.)

The argument in the text may be thought to prove too much, for if the superior being have not some right to make use of the inferior for his own advantage, the use we make of the brute creation must be indefensible.

In this place I am about to show, that the use we make of the brutes is justified on grounds quite different from their inferiority; and that it is neither a law of reason nor a law of nature, that the inferior should be a natural sacrifice to the superior.

1st. It is not a law of reason; for reason recognises both the principle of mercy, which forbids such sacrifice *without necessity*, and the feeling of pity, which instinctively revolts from the unlimited cruelty, such a maxim would justify. Reason also recognises the due and various relations of sentient creatures, which would be disturbed, and perhaps subverted, by the extended operation of such a

maxim. The relation of superior and inferior, being itself but one of many relations, can never be designed to preponderate over all others.

2nd. It is not a law of nature, because we do not find nature following any such rule as giving the worst of her creatures to the better; the better are just as often sacrificed to the worse.

The real law of nature is simply that animals live and come to perfection, to a very great extent by destroying, or otherwise making use of each other. As it is their nature to do so: there is no limit to their right, but their wants and their desires. Wherever this law prevails, animals may be considered as dissociated by nature. It takes place between animals of different species. But between animals of the same species, on the contrary, the life and perfection of the creature require, to a great extent, mutual affections and assistance; by this law they are naturally associated. That nature has created this necessity for mutual destruction, is a simple fact; and the authority of a law of nature, when clearly made out, is the strongest upon which any right can rest. It is by virtue of this law that man has a right to make use of the brutes, as they have to make use of him. But the right does not lead to unlimited cruelty, because man is further under the law of reason, by which he alone, of all animals, becomes sensible of the obligation of mercy. He is made susceptible of pity, and his reason informs him *that* ought to be cultivated, and that it is a duty, (in pursuing his own purposes,) to spare the inferior animals every unne-

cessary suffering. These positions shall be unfolded and illustrated more fully in the course of the following observations.

In the text it has been observed, that the right of the superior to rule the inferior depends, as an abstract truth, altogether on the assumption that the rule of the superior will be more just and wise than that of the other. But if the interests of one party are to be really sacrificed, the rule cannot be just and wise in relation to them; and this is the case under consideration. The right of the male sex to the chief rule, inasmuch as they are wiser to plan and abler to execute what is for the *common advantage*, admits no dispute. But when the abler party is tempted to employ his superiority for his own interests solely, to dissociate the others, and profit at their expense, then the question arises, whether it be not a mere return to the law of force; and whether the *moral* right to obedience be not thereby cancelled, and the right to resist, evade, or elude the oppression of a superior, be not as clear as the right to evade or resist that of an equal or an inferior?

When it is pretended that the superior has a natural right to sacrifice the inferior, the superiority must be understood to relate to his intelligence, not his strength. For if by the superior be only meant the strongest, the proposition would only re-assert the law of force; whereas, the very object of right and justice is to supersede force.

Understood of intelligence, however, it is not true, either by the laws of reason or of nature, that the inferior is the natural sacrifice to the superior.

To attempt to establish such a doctrine on grounds of reason, would lead to terrible consequences, for if admitted, then arises this further inquiry: to what extent may the superior sacrifice the interests of the inferior to his own? If to any, each being, as he ascended in the order of existence, might stand more and more in the relation of a demon to those beneath him, and the door would be opened to unlimited cruelty. If it be said that the right of the superior extends only to the lowest amount of sacrifice his own good requires, then it must be inquired, what is, in reason and justice, to be deemed his own good? And how could the uses, we make of the brute creation, be made to agree with any answer that could be given? Can the amusement of a passing hour, to him who has an hundred occupations at command, be esteemed his good, in any such sense as to justify the destruction of a score of winged and joyous creatures who drop at his command, and when it is not even pretended that he needs them for subsistence? Our carnivorous nature and our unclothed bodies may require the sheep for sustenance, and his wool for clothing, but how can the mere desire for splendour justly require that the ermine, the sable, the otter, and many other creatures should be hunted from their remote and humble lodgings in the outskirts of existence, to give their skins for our trimmings? Can the pleasure of wearing a brighter shade of scarlet justify the destruction of the myriads of living creatures, whose little bodies supply the dye?

What shall we say of the perpetual servitude and imprisonment of horses, wanted neither for tillage

nor health, but mere amusement or display? What of the sentence of life or death passed on every animal, we either domesticate or can reach with a missile or a gun, for the slightest purpose distinguishable from a whim,—sometimes for that alone? What sort of authority, then, can we pretend to derive from reason, for the right of the superior to sacrifice the inferior animal, when reason can neither leave the right unlimited without the most revolting cruelty, nor yet supply any rule by which it should be limited?

If reason will not sanction the doctrine, as little will the laws of nature. It does not require the researches of science, to see that the least sagacious animal is not always the prey of the most so. Instances of the contrary, open to every eye, are sufficiently numerous to disprove the existence of any such law. Whether we estimate the intelligence of animals, by their regular progression under the great divisions made by naturalists, or by the apparent sagacity and powerful instinct of the several species existing under each, in neither view does nature appear to follow the rule of making the inferior a regular sacrifice to the superior. We frequently find the better a prey to the worse. It is very difficult to compare the intelligence of animals. We cannot doubt that they reason as we do, to a certain extent, but of instinct we know very little. Its operations are not clearly separable from reasoning. But when we see animals, that hold a very low place in existence, effecting their purposes by means that would imply more reason than much nobler creatures

possess, and more than those animals themselves show in other instances, we are perhaps justified in denying its influence altogether, and attributing the effects to that unknown faculty, instinct. But without attempting to enter minutely into so uncertain a point, as the comparative intelligence of different creatures, it seems to settle the question to consider, in general, that among animals the least sagacious are not peculiarly the prey of the most so. Who could say that wolves and hyænas were more intelligent than horses or dogs, camels or monkeys, or that hawks were superior to every bird that they will devour?

Not to dwell longer on a point that seems not very likely to be contested, let us conclude with observing that universally, the great, the finely-constructed, the intelligent, those which constitute the higher divisions of animal nature, are given for prey to the meanest of creatures, insects and vermin. From the human being and the elephant, down to the least animal whom we have had the power of examining, all are the prey, or in some manner the victim, of small and apparently senseless insects who lodge in their skin, or assail their eyes, or deposit their eggs in their bodies. And with regard to man himself, if we attend to the accounts of those who have penetrated the wilds, where the progress of civilization has never controlled the increase of the inferior animals, we shall find his complaints are less of the tiger and the serpent, than of the musquito and the sandfly. These are the enemies to whom he is given up by nature almost without defence, and

by these only, I believe, has he ever been forced to relinquish settling where his wants would have led him.

The instances which, at first sight, seem to give most support to the opposite side of the question, are found, perhaps, in those shoals of animals, which may seem as if created principally to serve as food to the larger species,—whose sensitive existence appears very low, and some of whom scarcely possess the power of locomotion, others not at all. There are parts of our coasts, where from high and wild headlands, reefs of flat rocks run out to a great extent, and at spring tides are left bare by the waters. On these we may wander out, till every sight and sound of living nature is lost or hidden, by the insensible descent of the enormous strata we have passed. Nothing is heard but the slow roll of the retreating surge, and the solitude and desolation affect the spirits with a kind of horror. Images of wreck rise up in the imagination, where the eye can see no bounds to the savage rocks; and not the vestige of a weed, not an insect on the wing, seems to offer support to the meanest creature. But the reverie is broken by a faint rustling sound, perceived about the feet; and we then discover for the first time, that we have been walking for hours over a pavement of living creatures. What seemed the discolorations of the stone, are the districts of different animals, as close as the moss upon the field; all probably enjoying happiness in the simple sensation of existence, and being themselves the harvests of greater and more animated beings.

Where supplying food to others, appears to constitute a great part of the purpose for which some animals have been called into existence, there appears also some reason for suspecting they are so constructed, as to have little loss in yielding up lives that are called for in such profusion. For it is thought, that sensibility is in proportion to the quantity of the nervous structure. On this supposition, I have understood, that these animals can have comparatively but little. Their instantaneous death is preceded neither by fear nor reflection. But it does not follow that their enjoyment is diminished in the same proportion; for existence itself is enjoyment. Pain is its accident, its interruption. Those vivid but temporary excitements of our sensibilities, which we call pleasures in contradistinction to the comparative quiescence in which we pass a great deal of our time, are not essential to the perception of enjoyment. That is the result of simple existence; whatever is sufficient to sustain the one, provides the other. Gifted as men are with faculties for varied and animated emotions, continued quiescence would, to them, be utter misery; but where such faculties are not given, enjoyment depends much upon simple existence.

If these observations therefore be true, even those transitory creatures that vegetate upon the rock or people the air, cannot truly be considered as created for the service of others, to the detriment of their own welfare. Their feelings and capacities are formed for their own happiness, not for that of other beings, and whenever nature has given them the powers and the desire of any enjoyment, which

requires for its gratification the sacrifice of a superior animal, the flesh, the skin, the blood, or the clothing of the latter is yielded up to them with the strictest impartiality. Man is as natural a prey for the lion, the crocodile, the shark, and the musquito, as the sheep and the pheasant are for him. The grain that he has stored up for his subsistence, the elaborate tissues which constitute his clothing and furniture, fruits of his invention and industry, are yielded by nature, without scruple, to the maggot for food. It is simply the law of power or force that prevails, and from force, merely as such, no moral right to authority or preference can be deduced. It is quite true, that, taking a large view of nature, the ultimate result of superior sagacity is to gain the greater advantage in the long run. Accordingly, man generally does triumph over the brutes. But neither would this interpretation of the law of nature serve to establish a moral right to the power, available for any social purpose. For the authority so given by nature, extends no further than she gives power. Her example authorizes resistance as plainly as force, wherever it can be opposed. And what sort of a version of the supposed right of the superior would it be, that it was a right which it was as lawful to resist as to obey, and which vanished whenever it could not be enforced?

This, again, is a mere re-assertion of the law of force. Man assuredly has a right to make use of the brute, but so has the brute to make use of him. The natural law then, which sanctions the use that we make of the inferior animals, appears to be, that

throughout all creation, the life and happiness of some classes of animals depend on the destruction or privation of others. It is the law of their existence to attain to perfection by those means; and there is no limit to their right to do so but their power and their desires. To this extent the law of nature is a law of war; and as far as it prevails, animals are positively dissociated, by laws as clear and as definite as those, whereby others (those at least of the same species) are associated. They make use of each other for prey, and even for sport. Ranging the same fields of earth or air together, animals of different natures pursue each their own path, age after age, regardless of each other, except when one needs another for his food, or settles on him to deposit its eggs in his skin, or expels him from his nest, or chases and destroys him for mere amusement. Every avenue to mutual communication is impenetrably closed up. With very few exceptions, it may be said that no creature appears in the least to understand the cries or gestures of any other, except those only of menace.

There is, indeed, a certain pliancy in the laws of nature, as they relate to organized beings, which permits their habits to yield in a slight degree to circumstances. We therefore find examples of friendship or society between individuals of different species, and sometimes between the species themselves, as between ^{men} and dogs. But they are so rare in comparison with the general rule of fear and warfare, that we never cease to observe them as remarkable facts. We view them with an emotion of tenderness,

as if the customary spectacle of mutual fear or animosity, made the re-appearance of love, where we least expected it, doubly delightful. Like the spots of verdure in the desert, they owe their loveliness to the wastes around, and strongly point the prevalence of the contrary rule.

Among different species of animals, war and mutual destruction, fear and suspicion, sometimes unaccountable antipathy, otherwise utter indifference, are the law of nature; friendships are the exceptions. Between individuals of the same species, the reverse takes place; amity is the rule—war, its exception. In the first case they are dissociated, in the latter they are associated. Whatever the diversity in the habits of different animals, social sympathies are more or less apparent in all. The most solitary have at least affections for their young and their mates. Others associate together for society or protection. They form strong individual friendships. It is very evident they have a power of communication among each other. Some carry on great works in common; others unite to punish offenders. This has been frequently observed, both among rooks and sparrows. A violent chattering is heard amongst a flock of the latter, and when the battle in the air approaches nearer to the observer, several of the birds may be found engaged in an attack upon one. As soon as he is beaten to the ground, or their vengeance is satisfied, they part, evidently having gained their object, and showing they have no disposition to fight with each other*.

* WHITE'S *Nat. Hist. Selborne*.

In the northern parts of Scotland, and in the Feroe Islands, crows occasionally collect in great numbers, as if summoned for the occasion. A few of them sit with drooping heads; others seem as grave as if deliberating; and others again are flying about active and noisy; but after they disperse, one or more are sometimes found to have been left dead. Sometimes these congregations continue gathering for two or three days before any business is completed. At last a general noise ensues, the whole body seem intent on attacking one or two individuals, and after destroying them they disperse again*.

Near Oggersheim, a small village on the banks of the Rhine, a great number of storks collect before their annual migration. On one of these occasions, fifty of those creatures were observed to gather round one, whose demeanour showed great terror. One of the party then began to clap its wings, and continued for about five minutes; it was followed by a second, a third, and a fourth, then they all joined together, fell upon the poor culprit in the middle, and dispatched him in a few seconds†. The author from whom this fact is taken, observes that it is corroborated by the opinion of old writers, one of whom, in describing the migration of birds in the Eastern countries, says, that when they are preparing to go, the stork that arrives last at the place of rendezvous is always killed.

The warning note given by magpies, at the approach of danger, so well known to those who are

* STANLEY'S *Hist. Birds.*

† Ibid.

in the habit of shooting them, and the custom of having a sentinel, peculiar to certain quadrupeds as well as birds, is attributed by some people to a simple instinct of self-preservation in the creature itself, without reference to its companions. Why the social principle should be denied in these cases, if it can be proved in a great many others, is not easy to see. But there seems to be little doubt that the two shrill notes given by swallows, and known to the observers of those birds, are a communication to their companions. The swallow which utters them, is always at a distance, high up in the air, searching it is supposed for food; the instant these two notes are heard, the whole flock instantly take wing and disappear*.

The affection of birds for their mates, and for their young, is too well known to require illustration, and their misery when they lose them is sometimes painfully moving. In the yard of a large livery stable where some foreign poultry were reared, it happened that one of the horses trod upon a Muscovy duck, and of course bruised the poor little creature beyond the possibility of recovery. The drake saw what had happened, and came up screaming; it fluttered round and round its wounded mate, shaking its wings as if distracted, uttering at the same time hoarse guttural tones, so expressive of frantic grief, that it was with difficulty the gentleman who witnessed it could repress his tears.

A red-legged crow, which had been tamed, had its bill dreadfully crushed by the sudden shutting of

* JESSE'S *Gleanings*.

the window on the sill of which it was standing. It was nursed and fed with the greatest care by the person who had charge of it, and when the wound began to heal, it was suffered to go out among its companions, when it was immediately observed that they fed it regularly themselves*.

Water-hens have three broods in the season, and when the second hatch comes out, the young ones of the first hatch assist the old ones in feeding and hovering over them, and leading them out in parties. The cock bird sits alternately with the hen upon the eggs. Their nest is raised carefully out of reach of the water, but as the young, when first able to leave it, cannot climb up into it again, the cock bird constructs a larger nest for them close to the water's edge; and in this work the young birds also assist for the second brood†.

Birds sometimes die of grief when they lose their mates, and in the work just quoted, there is a moving story to that effect, related of an ostrich belonging to the Zoological Gardens at Paris.

A pair of sparrows were in search of a place to build their nest; and the male bird finding a suitable hole among the tiles of a roof, unfortunately became entangled among the broken mortar, and could not force his way out. The female saw his situation, and flying back to him several times twittering, and apparently in great distress, attempted to pull him out. Several birds attracted by the accident came fluttering round, but were beaten off by the hen sparrow. She then redoubled her own efforts to

* STANLEY'S *Hist. Birds*, † Ibid.

effect his release; and seizing his beak above the nostrils, pulled so hard that she killed him. He was taken out by the person who had been watching the transaction, and found dreadfully mangled. About an hour afterwards, a sparrow, supposed to be this hen, was observed sitting on the spot where the accident had happened, crouched together, her feathers all ruffled up so as to appear like a ball, and conveying the perfect idea of disconsolate affliction*.

A pair of swallows returning, as they frequently do, to take possession of their last year's nest, found it occupied by a sparrow, who resolutely kept possession, pecking at them with her strong beak whenever they approached, so that they found it impracticable to dislodge her. One morning they returned with several more of their own species, each carrying its beak distended with clay; by joint labour they quickly plastered up the entrance hole, and effectually punished the little intruder. Two or three similar instances are on record, and afford a striking proof of the power of communication possessed by some birds†.

Some of the most surprising acts attributed to the beaver, have been proved to be exaggeration. But they related rather to the degree of reasoning implied by the architecture of that animal, than to the subject now in question, the social sympathies it possesses. If their structures be composed with somewhat less art, than was formerly imagined, it remains not the less certain that the animals all co-operate in constructing their future habitation. Per-

* STANLEY'S *Hist. Birds*.

† Ibid.

haps the separate chambers of which it consists when finished, each of which contains a family, may be the work of individual beavers. But the first part of the process must be carried on in common upon a general design. It consists of cutting and carrying wood, earth, and stones, and forming with them a regular dam across a stream. It is made several feet thick at the base, and narrow at the upper level. They begin by laying two long sticks at an angle with each other, and then proceed to fill up. It is evident that if each beaver did not act in reference to what the others had done, the work would never get on. It is a remarkable example of the associating principle, because it appears to be given less for any absolute necessity to the creature's existence, than for the purposes of its social and affectionate disposition. It can live very well alone, for it is now admitted that the solitary and social beaver are the very same species.

“Numberless instances have shown, that these differences in their mode of life are the natural results of the circumstances, in which the animals are respectively placed, and that the habits of each, in a situation favourable to the change, undergo a thorough revolution. Place the means within his reach, and the constructive instinct of the solitary beaver becomes fully developed; withdraw those means, and the once skilful architect becomes a burrowing hermit*.”

In European countries, from having been nearly

* *Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society delineated.* Art. Beaver.

destroyed, they are never found in colonies; indeed, their nature in every situation is to spend the summer in holes along the banks of rivers, and only to form into colonies when autumn advances.

“An animal so sociable in its habits ought to be affectionate, and very affectionate the beaver is said to be. Drage mentions two young ones which were taken alive and brought to a neighbouring factory in Hudson’s Bay, where they throve very fast until one of them was accidentally killed. The survivor instantly felt the loss, began to moan, and abstained from food till it died.

“Mr. Bullock mentioned to the narrator a similar instance which fell under his notice in North America. A male and female were kept together in a room, where they lived happily till the male was deprived of his partner by death. For a day or two he appeared to be hardly aware of his loss, and brought food and laid it before her. At last finding she did not stir, he covered her body with twigs and leaves, and was in a pining state when Mr. Bullock lost sight of him*.”

Everybody is so familiar with the polity of bees and ants, that it would swell these examples uselessly to do more than recall it to mind. I shall only mention one trifling, but convincing instance of mutual intelligence. Two bees were flying together extremely slow, with a dull humming noise, about a foot from the ground. They had a load between them, and evidently were moving with much labour. At a few feet from their hive they let it drop, and after a rapid circuit in the air flew home.

* Ibid.

It was the dead body of a bee. In truth, those who attend to their own pastures, gardens, and kennels, will not want much to convince them of the social propensities and affections of animals.

Such, then, are the distinctions between the social and dissocial conditions among the various tenants of our globe. The reality of the distinction I think will, by most people, be admitted without hesitation, and even regarded as a truism. But if questioned at all, it will be rather on account of the attachment we see formed between animals of different natures when domesticated together; and occasionally between others, where no such reason for it existed. Instances are recorded by naturalists, in which animals of different species, uncontrolled by any artificial restraints, have formed attachments quite unaccountable to our minds. The works quoted above abound with interesting anecdotes of that nature; but giving them all their due weight, no objection, I think, can be drawn from them of any moment. They seem to prove nothing, but that possibly the anti-social habits of creatures may arise, solely from the circumstances in which they are destined to live, and not from a sentiment of mutual fear or dislike, purposely implanted. This supposition does no more than assign one origin (perhaps the most probable), rather than another, for the separation, suspicion, or enmity which takes place between different species of creatures. The fact itself is indisputable; it prevails all over the globe, and it would be impossible to regard it as an *accident*; besides, no inference which can be drawn from the supposition can destroy the great

and extensive fact, that animals live by preying on each other. How could creatures be more perfectly dissociated by the appointment of nature, than by making the life of the one depend on the destruction of the other?

It is by this law of nature, then, that man has a right to eat the sheep, to work the horse, to hunt the fox, to rob the beaver of his skin, and destroy myriads of insects that he may enjoy the fragrance of the rose, and the flavour of the peach. It is not because he is the superior. If he were to spare the animals, they would not spare him; they would deprive him of life, of property, or of comfort, for the least of their desires.

It results from the whole reasoning, that though the obligations of justice and mercy are binding on intelligent beings, wherever they discern the susceptibility of pleasure or suffering, yet the *same* rules of justice do not always apply to creatures of a different nature, as to our own species; since it has been shown, that in the case of the first, a special appointment of nature limits the application of the rules. No rule of action can have a stronger foundation than a law of nature, whether the law be agreeable to our ideas of wisdom and goodness, or not. To our apprehensions it may seem unaccountable, that God should have made creatures to be a necessary sacrifice to each other. But we all see that it is so; and our natural feelings never appear to revolt against finding the inferior intelligence obtaining the mastery over the superior.

Shakspeare violates no rule of natural feeling in making Ariel the slave of Prospero.

If more thou murmurest, I will rend an oak
And peg thee in his knotty entrails, till
Thou hast howled away twelve winters.
Go make thyself like to a nymph o' the sea,
Be subject to no sight but mine, invisible
To every eye-ball else. Go, take this shape
And hither come in 't. Hence with diligence.

And though a race of beings were to come from heaven and establish their abode among us, it does not follow that it would be the immediate duty of man to yield up his interests to theirs. It would be departing from the argument, to say that we ought to prefer the government of such wise and good beings to our own. No one disputes the duty of submitting to decisions, which we acknowledge to be wise and good; but with respect to us, they could not be wise and good, unless they promoted our welfare, as well as that of the beings from whom they emanated. The whole question turns on the opposition of interests between an inferior and a superior, and whether, in such case, the one ought in duty to be an unresisting sacrifice to the other; surely not. So far as the nobler race were actuated solely by self-interest, whenever man found that he was to be sacrificed, he would have a natural right to consult his own preservation, and resist or elude the oppression in any way that he best could. I beg attention to this position, as it follows that obedience can never be a moral duty, when the benefits of authority are all on the side of the master.

Submission may be virtuous for many reasons, but not because it is due to the oppressor. Resistance might entail more discord, or bloodshed, than the evil resisted. It might serve to perplex the judgments of many, who cannot distinguish between what is unjust and what is only disagreeable. It might be very culpable to overturn an authority otherwise lawful, for one's own sake alone: and there are few questions harder to decide, than to know when the pressure of tyranny is so great, so universal, and so capable of remedy, as to overbalance the mischiefs that would arise from the resistance of an ignorant and passionate multitude. But the virtue which endures wrong rather than create mischief, the prudence and integrity which yield in sincerity, to a power which has no probability of being resisted successfully, are quite different from the duty of obedience to authority, because it is just. A just right to command involves a just right to the submission of others, and to withhold obedience would be morally wrong, though no means of enforcing it could be called into action.

I must be allowed to digress from the direct subject for a few moments, to guard against the idea, that the view herein taken of animal life holds out the least excuse for cruelty. It has only unfolded the reasons, which render a common measure for the ministration of benevolence to animals and to man, impracticable. The duty of sparing them every suffering the furtherance of our own interest permits, is an essential branch of that benevolent principle, which it is a peculiar prerogative of rational crea-

tures to feel, without which wisdom loses all its grandeur, and power becomes pure evil. Notwithstanding the ferocity of man, compassion is there, planted by the hand of the Creator, and if we owe it not to the inferior, to the dissociated creature, must we not shudder at the inference that the greatest of all beings may not owe it to us! Is not their right to the enjoyments that nature provided for them, as clear as our own? And if that law of existence, by which animals live much at the expense of each other, justify us in taking their service or their lives as we need them, is it the less clearly a dictate of justice, to give them in return all the happiness that we can? No vice in the dark catalogue of human depravity is so detestable as cruelty, in all its forms. And if the law of benevolence enjoin us, in furthering our own purposes, to spare the inferior animals every annoyance we can, with what language shall we stigmatize making sport of their sufferings? To take pleasure in the misery of others is the definition of a demon, and nothing that tends to such a horrid distortion of human nature, should be endured by the laws of a Christian country.

Field sports, though derived from a natural instinct, would be scarcely defensible in our highly civilized condition, if the infliction of suffering were the source of the pleasure, as in cock-fights and bull-baiting. We find persons of a contemplative cast (accompanied, in most instances, with some degree of indifference towards every active pursuit), in whom the instinctive propensity to the chase is entirely obliterated. These can see nothing in it, but the

incomprehensible humour of first terrifying, and then killing a defenceless animal. But though there be something remarkably delightful in this cast of mind, yet it may be doubted whether it be not rather one of those delicate varieties, which a state of high refinement draws out of simpler feelings, than a moral improvement of much importance, likely to lessen materially the sufferings of the brute creation. Want of taste for the chase often proceeds from mere bodily indolence, and is by no means attended with peculiar humanity in other respects.

In a state of nature the chase is so obviously justifiable, that the only question which can arise is, whether civilization ought to supersede it, as a mode of destruction that might be spared. But when we consider the safe and abundant harbour, this taste provides for the animals till the moment that deprives them of existence, and the large proportion who are destroyed instantaneously, compared with those who are wounded and left to linger, the animals are perhaps considerable gainers compared with those which remain in their native wilds. It should not be overlooked, that in the latter condition they are equally exposed to destruction from other animals; and that to those who escape, a natural death, though less terrible, is certainly more lingering. These remarks apply also, and perhaps more strongly still, to the domestic animals that supply our tables.

When we take into account the intense delight people take in field sports, the safe channel into which they let out the restless animation of youth,

the vigour and hardiness they generate, and the tide of health and energy they restore to the pale victims of sedentary professions, or over zeal in the noblest intellectual pursuits, we may well question the eventual gain to the cause of humanity, by discouraging this taste. Men themselves are, in some respects, great sufferers by the evils that are suffered to attend upon field sports. A very serious objection to them is to be found in the game laws.

These considerations upon animals have been extended to a length that may scarcely seem pardonable. But who that has ever watched this interesting part of creation, their beautiful forms, their affectionate natures, their useful properties,—who that has ever felt his heart bleed, and his bosom burn with indignation at the usage they too often receive, could pass the subject, leaving behind the remotest suspicion of having contributed, by anything said, to lessen the defective sympathy they receive? Neither was it desirable to leave the arguments urged in their behalf, open to an overstrained application, which might have shaken the influence of the whole.

NOTE H, (p. 200.)

The supposed fact here alluded to is, that the sense of justice originates in the selfish principle.

It is expedient to warn the reader that, in this place, the word selfish is not used in an ill sense, but merely as a philosophical distinction. Whatever is a

virtue, must have either ourselves or our fellow creatures for its object*. Thus temperance, fortitude, industry, are useful chiefly to ourselves. Charity, generosity, pity, &c., chiefly to other persons. Sometimes the good of both parties may be concerned. But it is not necessary in this place to enter into the subject more deeply. It is evident that if we had no regard to our own interest, no appeals to us in favour of temperance, industry, or any other prudential virtue, would have any effect. Even the rewards of religion could have no influence. And if we had no natural sympathy with our fellow creatures, we should not have even a notion of the meaning of compassion, friendship, charity, or any social affection. We should be equally incapable of taking interest in the events of a poem or a play. But as nobody is destitute of some interest for the fate of his fellow creatures, whatever course of action promotes their happiness is the object of natural approbation. And again, this very sympathy with the good of mankind, leads us also to feel that each man *ought* to conduct himself so as to insure his *own* real happiness. We condemn him strongly, when he cannot command his impulses so far as to sacrifice some trifling present enjoyment, for a greater and more permanent advantage.

* It is scarcely necessary to observe that the present inquiry relates solely to the principles of morals, and therefore our duty to our Creator does not come within its scope. Religion gives the highest sanction to moral duties, but the moral duties are in the first instance agreeable to the perfection of our nature, or religion would not have commanded them. An inquiry into the principles of morals, therefore, is an inquiry what principle in our nature each virtue springs from.

Every virtue therefore is founded either on the selfish principle, the social principle, or on both. It will be readily seen, that so far as the obligation to any virtue depends on its utility to ourselves, it ceases altogether when the virtue is no longer useful to ourselves. Frugality has no merit, when the things saved are no longer of any use to us, and in like manner, temperance and fortitude, when they consist in renouncing things that do us no harm of any kind, and in bearing useless sufferings, are mere monkish austerities, long since banished from the esteem of cultivated minds. Therefore, if justice derive its obligation from self-interest solely, it is as true of justice as of temperance or fortitude, that it ceases to be a duty when it ceases to be useful to ourselves. This is, indeed, the inference that Hume draws, and very correctly from his own premises. If the premises are true, so is the inference.

It is true that he calls justice a social virtue, but in a peculiar sense. In general, by the term social virtues, he means the virtues that are derived from our love for our fellow creatures. But when he applies the term "social" to the virtue of justice, he means only, that it depends for its existence on a combination amongst many individuals. A man might practise temperance and frugality in solitude, he could not practise justice.

In this sense he calls it a social virtue, but he denies that, like the other social virtues, it springs from our fellow feeling for mankind. He says that in every other social virtue, we feel an immediate affection towards some person or persons, beyond

which we never look. We fly to the relief of a child or a friend, without any other motive than the simple desire of their good; and he imagines that this is never the case with justice. He thinks its utility is never felt in single acts, but that we discover it by experience, and reflecting on the inconvenience we ourselves should suffer for want of some general rule, that should put an end to disputes. In short, he supposes it a sort of compromise, in which we yield that we may gain; and that we join in a uniform system for mutual support, as men, all wanting to cross a ferry, would join together in pulling up the boat by the same rope, though none of them cared for the convenience of any one but himself. He uses this illustration to explain his theory, which is very intelligible, though I hope to show that it is not true. There are many social transactions of the nature he attributes to acts of justice; the sole benefit of which, is their effect on society at large, and which no man is expected to join in, for any reason but his individual interest. A man might think a large emigration would be a great advantage to his country; but he would not be bound to go abroad for that reason. The formation of a commercial settlement might appear to him of the highest importance to the nation; yet he is under no obligation to join it, except for his own convenience. The different professions of social life are essential to its prosperity; but which, each man shall choose, or whether he shall engage in any, is regulated entirely by self-interest. In all these cases and many others, it is quite true, that when we are sure no evil will

recoil on ourselves, by refusing those social functions, we are free to do so. But to place the performance of justice upon such a footing as this, is to destroy its very nature. Our approbation of justice seems quite as dependent as any other form of beneficence, on the sympathy we have with our fellow creatures. Why should it not? If it be certain that it is a part of our nature to take pleasure in the good of others, and to feel for their afflictions, why not as well for such as they endure from injustice, as from any other cause? It requires no great examination to be convinced, that the utility of justice is felt in many cases as immediately, and with as little reflection upon anything but the benefit of the parties concerned, as in the case of other social virtues. Children feel the force of justice very early and very strongly, and surely it will not be thought, that they are actuated by any reflections on the evils that might accrue to themselves, if property and rights were not well secured.

Misled, as I think, by confining his attention too much to the views of justice which regulate acquired property, and which sometimes are very artificial, he goes so far as to say, that untutored nature assuredly never gave us such ideas as "mine and yours." What strange reasoning it is, to assume that, because the complicated relations of advanced society, require some very far-fetched applications of the principles of justice, we have no ideas more natural! Were human beings ever found in a state of society, without the ideas of "mine and yours?" Do not the ideas spring from the consciousness of individual and

separate existence? Was there ever a language found without them? Must they not be suggested to each individual by his own limbs, his own deeds, his own children, his own bow and arrow, as distinguished from those of other persons? And can the relation he discerns, between himself and those things, be separable from the *feeling* of a right in them? To violate that right, would be regarded as an outrage in the rudest state of nature, and would awaken sympathy as naturally as any other form of injury. It is, in truth, only when we believe a man's dealings are governed by this respect to the interests of his fellow-creatures, that we consider him to be really just; not when we suspect that he does right, only from the fear of ultimately suffering himself, if he should commit wrong.

Moreover, what is our conduct with a person who is about to commit an injustice? Is it not in the first instance to appeal to his *sympathies*, to paint in the strongest colours the sufferings of the parties concerned, and to represent the extent of the mischief the example may do? It is only when all this has failed, that we address his *selfish* principle. As soon as we say to ourselves, "there is no use in appealing to this man's justice or humanity, he wants the common sympathies of human nature,"—we then begin to point out the odium that will fall on his own head, and the inconvenience he will suffer from want of character, or from the insecurity his example may entail upon property.

On the contrary, if we would recommend the virtues that are really derived from self-interest, we

appeal to that principle at once. We warn the intemperate man that he will injure his health, stupefy his faculties, oppress his spirits with melancholy. We lay before him the opportunities of advancing himself and forming agreeable friendships, that he will forfeit because he cannot submit to a privation.

If his indulgence be not such as to injure him, we cease to censure it. Suppose this inquiry addressed to some friend, "I observe you have left off your strict rules of temperance, you eat and drink more freely than formerly;" if he replied, "Yes, and I have gained strength both of body and mind in consequence, but I never exceed what is healthful;" we should be perfectly satisfied. But suppose such a conversation to pass on a question of justice. "I perceive you no longer adhere to those strict rules of integrity which formerly marked your transactions." Would it be a valid excuse if he answered, "Very true, and I find my circumstances thereby much improved—but then I take care never to wrong any one who can possibly retaliate, or injure my credit?" Why is this answer so inadequate in the last case, but because we all feel that a man's ideas of justice should be regulated by regard for his fellow creatures, and not solely from a calculation of what is best for himself? According to Hume's theory, the above answer is philosophically right. He makes an unsuccessful attempt to evade this consequence, by suggesting that a clever knave like the above, might still be met with an argument drawn from the risk of detection, and from the *anti-*

pathy which, he says, *ingenuous natures have to fraud*. But if “ingenuous natures” have an antipathy to fraud, even when it serves their interests, this shows they have a sympathy with justice, independent of selfish considerations; which is the present argument. Whereas if his statement be right, so is the knave, and the ingenuous person has no reason for objecting to him. If the true principle of justice be, to maintain its rules so far as they are beneficial to oneself and no further, all men are right who act in that manner; and the antipathy of the ingenuous nature is quite unaccounted for.

Some difference of opinion might perhaps arise between one man and another, as to whether it was his interest or not, to be just in some particular case; but the selfish interest being established, no further doubt could exist as to the perfect propriety of fraud.

We may now proceed to the inferences, this author has himself deduced from the foundation he has laid. “Were there,” says he, “a species of creatures intermingled with men, which, though rational, were possessed of such inferior strength, both of body and mind, that they were incapable of all resistance, and could never upon the highest provocation make us feel the effects of their resentment: the *necessary consequence* I think is, that we should be bound by the laws of *humanity* to give gentle usage to these creatures, but should not, properly speaking, be under any restraints of justice with regard to them, nor could they possess any rights or property exclusive of such arbitrary lords. Our

intercourse with them could not be called society, which supposes a degree of equality, but absolute command on the one side and servile obedience on the other. Whatever we covet, they must instantly resign, our permission is the only tenure by which they hold their possessions, our compassion and kindness the only check by which they curb our lawless will: and as no inconvenience ever results from the exercise of a power so firmly established in nature, the restraints of justice and property, being totally useless, would never have place in so unequal a confederacy.

“This is plainly the situation of men with regard to animals, and how far these may be said to possess reason, I leave it to others to determine. The great superiority of civilized Europeans over barbarous Indians, tempted us to imagine ourselves on the same footing with regard to them, and made us throw off all restraints of justice, and even of humanity, in our treatment of them. In many nations the female sex are reduced to like slavery, and are rendered incapable of all property, in opposition to their lordly masters. But though the males, when united, have force sufficient to maintain this severe tyranny; yet such are the charms, insinuation, and address of their fair companions, that women are commonly able to break the confederacy, and share with the other sex in all the rights and privileges of society.”

In these passages, it is evident that the rights enjoyed by the female sex, have not resulted from the increased empire which moral restraints obtain

over the mind, as knowledge and civilization advance, but (to use an expressive phrase) have been *wheedled* from the men. Though the writer apparently shrinks from entirely justifying the conduct of the Europeans to the Indians, yet excepting its inhuman cruelty, it was quite defensible according to his theory. The very same arguments might be used by the slave-holder in favour of his rights, the Arab who plunders the traveller, the parent state that vexes its colonies, the powerful one that seizes on the liberties of the weaker, the corporations that make monopolies, the aristocracies that overlay the people, and the members of the Holy Alliance, who weigh the rights of all mankind in the balance against themselves, and find them wanting. The whole doctrine indeed is comprised in the old saying that "might makes right."

These consequences appear undeniable, if we grant that it is because women are defenceless they have no claim to justice. He does not assume it as a peculiarity of their *sex*, that it is incompatible with rights. It is distinctly on their incapacity of resistance and vengeance that he denies their claim. Every other party in the same predicament, must therefore be liable to the same exclusion. This is virtually admitted in another passage, where he observes, "Society could not subsist without justice among members of one community, but nations can subsist without intercourse, therefore the observance of justice among them, though useful, is not guarded by so strong a necessity, and the *moral obligation holds with the usefulness.*"

Never surely did a man pretending to write upon morals, come to a worse conclusion !

It is not denied, that men act very often as if this detestable and mischievous principle were true. The defenceless are oppressed, and treaties are violated ; those actions are even sanctioned by opinion on many occasions. But whose opinion? That of the corrupt and the interested, the thoughtless, the ignorant, the prejudiced. The test that proves them wrong, is that they are disastrous to humanity. Nature has given us self-love under the guidance of reason, that we may control our impulses, and learn to act with a view to our own greatest benefit. She has bound us together by sympathy, that we may co-operate in producing the greatest good to the whole. And we are no more entitled to take the example of those, whose sympathy is too weak for the service of society, than we should be to yield to the precepts of those, in whom reason and judgment were deficient. It is very possible that the deficient in sympathy and in judgment may be the most numerous part of society ; but the opinions and feelings of such persons are an imperfect standard.

Every reason adduced by Hume, to show that justice proceeds from the selfish, and not the sympathetic principle, would serve just as well to prove that benevolence itself, sometimes proceeded from a mere calculation of selfishness. He says that the utility of justice never appears from single acts, but arises entirely from reference to a uniform rule. Whereas in acts of benevolence, he says, we never

look beyond the immediate good done to the object of our sympathy. But this supposed reference to a general rule is not peculiar to justice, nor with respect to it, always the case. The same regard to general system is frequently found in undertakings of pure benevolence. There are a multitude of cases of justice, in which the mind looks not beyond the immediate and present benefit of the parties concerned.

Separate acts of justice, he says, may be mischievous, their effect may be to give pain. This is quite as true of many forms of benevolence. We deny to one, that we may give to a more deserving; we impose present suffering, that we may ensure future good; we give pain, that we may heal. There is greater benevolence in seeking to serve many than few, and everybody than one. But justice is the greatest beneficence that can be divided with numbers. If doing justice be attended on a great many occasions, with very little of that animated emotion which accompanies acts of generosity, it can only be inferred from thence, that we act from a strong *conviction* of *reason*, that the good of our fellow-creatures ought to be a paramount object, whether we feel any great pleasure in it or not; but even this is true of many forms of benevolence. People assign a portion of their fortune to relieving the poor, whom, perhaps, they do not even see, and consequently where there can be little emotion: and if the pleasure of the actions be not very sensible, the uneasiness of omitting them would nevertheless be intolerable.

What then is justice but the rule for dispensing the widest beneficence, with the least selfish interest on the part of the bestower? For justice lays no claim to any return, not even to thanks. It might be objected that if justice be indeed the most extensive beneficence, we ought to be more grateful for it than for acts of generosity, which would be contrary to natural sentiment. This objection will vanish, if we reflect that generosity presupposes that justice has first been fulfilled: it would excite small gratitude, to rob a man of his rights and then give him back part as a present. But when justice has been satisfied, the generosity that ministers to wants, which justice cannot relieve, naturally excites the warmer emotion. It leaves all the general good, and supplies the particular besides. It comes in where no right can be granted, and where all rules must cease; but it never could supply the place of rule: all the benevolence in the world would never compensate for the absence of a system of rights and justice. No human charity, liberality, friendship, or love, dispensed by any wisdom our nature is capable of, could spread through society the plenty, the security, the independence, the industry, the contentment that flow from the administration of justice: and in fact, if gratitude be measured by the duration and extensiveness of love and respect, rather than by momentary intensity, it may be affirmed with great truth, that no virtue excites it so much as justice.

NOTE I, (p. 201.)

In the text the remark upon justice is not offered as a full definition of the term; in fact, it leaves out that remarkable part of our sense of justice, which leads us to think happiness the due meed of virtue, and pain and punishment that of vice, independently of any theory in men's minds about the utility of such examples to society. But it seemed unnecessary to consider that branch of the subject which has no peculiar connexion with the rights of women. The definition is true as far as it goes.

NOTE K, (p. 203.)

To refer the substitution of justice for force, to reason, is not inconsistent with deriving its origin from our native sympathy with each other, as already done in a preceding place. If we had no power whatever of knowing each other's feelings, or no satisfaction whatever in their good, it would be impossible for us to form any notion of what would be just towards them; reason could have no data to go upon. It signifies not how weak, people may reckon our sympathy compared with our selfishness; weak or strong, it is an element of our nature which certainly exists, and is indispensable to the perception of justice. Another proof that justice springs from reason, is its absence in the case of brutes and the lowest orders of human nature. In animals sympathy exists, but not such reason as can ripen those

sympathies into rights and justice. In savages, where their sympathies exist, as they do between one another, some principles of justice begin to show themselves, but for strangers they have not sympathy, and as their reason is uncultivated, so justice fails to appear.

NOTE L, (p. 213.)

A question has occasionally been raised, and I believe by more than one writer, whether the right of voting be not unjustly withheld from women. But it seems an almost conclusive objection to giving them the franchise, that by the very principle upon which it is bestowed, women are unfit for it, being always under influence. There are no doubt some cases of exception to that rule, but so there are to every other rule, by which persons are excluded from the right. Perhaps no other rule is so extensively true, as that women are under influence. But farther, women have no *political* interests apart from those of men. The public measures that are taken, the restrictions or taxes imposed on the community do not affect them more than male subjects. In all such respects, the interests of the two sexes are identified. As citizens, therefore, they are sufficiently represented already. To give them the franchise would just double the number of voters, without introducing any new interest, and far from improving society, few things would tend more to dis-sever and corrupt it.

But the disabilities or oppressions to which they

are subject *as women*, could not be in any degree remedied by possessing the franchise. Interests of that description, being exclusively female, would come into collision, not, as in other cases, with the interests of a class or a party, but with those of the whole male sex, and one of two things would happen. Either one sex would be arrayed in a sort of general hostility to the other, or they would be divided amongst themselves. Than the first, nothing could possibly be devised more disastrous to the condition of women. They would be utterly crushed; the old prejudices would be revived against their education, or their meddling with anything but household duties. Every man of mature age would probably stipulate on marrying, that his wife should forswear the use of the franchise, and all ideas connected with political influence or the coarse and degrading contentions of the elections.

If each sex were divided among themselves on particular questions, unprincipled men would endeavour to secure their elections, by creating female parties. Men of such characters now disguise their personal interests, by affecting to adopt some measure popular with the mob, or suited only to the partial interests of some locality. They do not always desire to forward such measures; but they delude and corrupt the people by using them as pretexts. If women had the franchise, men would address themselves to the worst part of the sex, the most clamorous, and those least restrained by female decorum. The pretexts made use of to delude them would probably be injudicious, as measures, and condemned by the informed and reflecting of their own sex.

It has been maintained throughout this work, that the interests of women can be served, chiefly through opinion, though without denying that some legal enactments might also be required for certain special hardships. Can it be seriously imagined by any dispassionate woman, that those legal changes could be as well brought about, by the power of now and then forcing an advocate into the legislature, as by their general influence in society, won through their own moral and mental deserts, and identified in men's minds with the influence, which justice must always retain over their feelings?

Conducted as elections now are, scenes of violence and tumult, women would be subject to every species of insult. It may be imagined that a remedy might be found for that—but what remedy would be found for the inflictions no law could reach or define, and which they would suffer at home for that exertion of their right, which was opposed to the interests or prejudices of their male relations? Can it be supposed the ballot would give any security? Surely not. Intimidation and bribery, already so mischievous, would be far more dangerous to the timidity, and comparative poverty of women, than they now are to men. And educated as they are, their most honest decisions would be worse formed, even than those of the other sex, defective as the political knowledge of the greater number is still allowed to be.

NOTE M, (p. 235.)

THE utility of coercion in giving self-command, when moral principle is feeble, is illustrated in a remarkable manner in a short work, which particularly deserves the attention of persons engaged in education. It is entitled *Elements of the Pathology of the Human Mind*, by THOMAS MAYO, M.D., F.R.S. In the Appendix to it, the reader will find an account of a young man, in whom moral perceptions were so deficient as to constitute a form of insanity, so far as that term may be applied to derangement of the feelings, rather than to that of the mental faculties, which in him were not deficient. The principle of the treatment to which this young man was subjected was, (to use the author's expression,) to give the restraints imposed on him, as much as possible, the invincible, and at the same time, dispassionate character of a law of nature. There was, in his management, nothing that could gall or tease, but also nothing that could be evaded. Certain restraints, or privations, were made the invariable consequences of certain acts of insubordination. From these, therefore, he learned to refrain, as a man learns not to run into danger: the deficient moral sense was supplied by a sense of expediency, and he learned the habit of submitting to that consideration. Thus was the power of self-control given in a case of particular and unusual difficulty.

NOTE N, (p. 245.)

IN confirmation of the views given in the text the following examples may be added:—

Clairault and Lalande were assisted by Madame Lepaute, in their laborious calculations for Halley's comet. Clairault calls her "La savante calculatrice." These calculations employed the incessant labour of all three for six months. Lalande declares, that without her assistance they could not have succeeded, but her assiduity was such that her eyesight was injured. She was the authoress of several scientific works, useful in their day, but which, with many others, have now lost their value by the progress of science, which seldom leaves lasting celebrity except to great discoverers. She was a very beautiful woman, with polished manners, a great deal of wit, and full of generosity and tenderness. Her husband was a clock-maker, a man very much distinguished for his science, and much esteemed. Madame Lepaute died of seven years' close attendance upon him in his last illness. He survived her a very short time, and was suffered to spend the remnant of his days in ignorance of his loss.—See *Biographie Universelle*; article Lepaute.

I have myself known a lady, whose assistance in arranging and preparing the materials for a work of great labour and merit, was so important, that it is doubtful, whether her husband's life and health would have enabled him to get through the task without her aid. That assistance of this nature

remains unrewarded, either by money or fame, is no objection. The vigour of mind, the consciousness of utility, the personal interest in a husband's success, or in that of a parent or a son, are rewards enough. The above instances are unusual, especially that of Madame Lepaute; but the ordinary business of life does not require unusual abilities, and in the text it is only the capacity of rendering assistance in what is commonly wanted, that is so earnestly recommended.

NOTE O, (p. 251.)

SUBMISSION to wrong is very often a duty to society. If every subordinate refused submission to every trifling encroachment upon his privileges, they would thereby, all constitute themselves judges in their own cause, and there would be an end of all order. Any conduct which leads to that dreadful condition is highly reprehensible, for, as has been already stated, the character of actions is to be judged of, not solely by the specific effects of each individual act, but by the consequences, supposing such conduct to become general. It is the condition of society, that rights are to be constituted, not according to the particular interests of each case, but by some general rule, which, upon the whole, produces the nearest approach to perfect equity. If the rule, on the one side, leave the way open to petty violations of justice on the part of the superior, on the other, it gives little security for invariable sub-

mission when commands are just. These are but the unavoidable evils attendant on general rules, and do not overbalance the good effects of such rules. On this is founded the duty of bearing with wrong. If no stretch of authority is ever to be endured, no failure of due obedience is ever to be pardoned: such rigour would be intolerable to both parties.

Again, one virtue is not to be maintained to the exclusion of all others. Few moral duties are plainer than those of mutual forbearance, patience, forgiveness, and returning good for evil, in all the relations of life; and they are as incumbent on one party as on another.

On the other side, if nobody ever resisted any aggression of power, the empire of violence and wrong would be everywhere established, and the very ends for which society is created, (which are virtue and happiness,) would be destroyed. The cultivation of reason and moral principle is therefore essential, in all classes and both sexes. In general, the clearer the reasons and uses of authority are, and the less the rights of the superiors are mingled up with unreasonable powers, the more willing will be the submission, and the more will insubordinate tempers be restrained by the disapprobation of common opinion.

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